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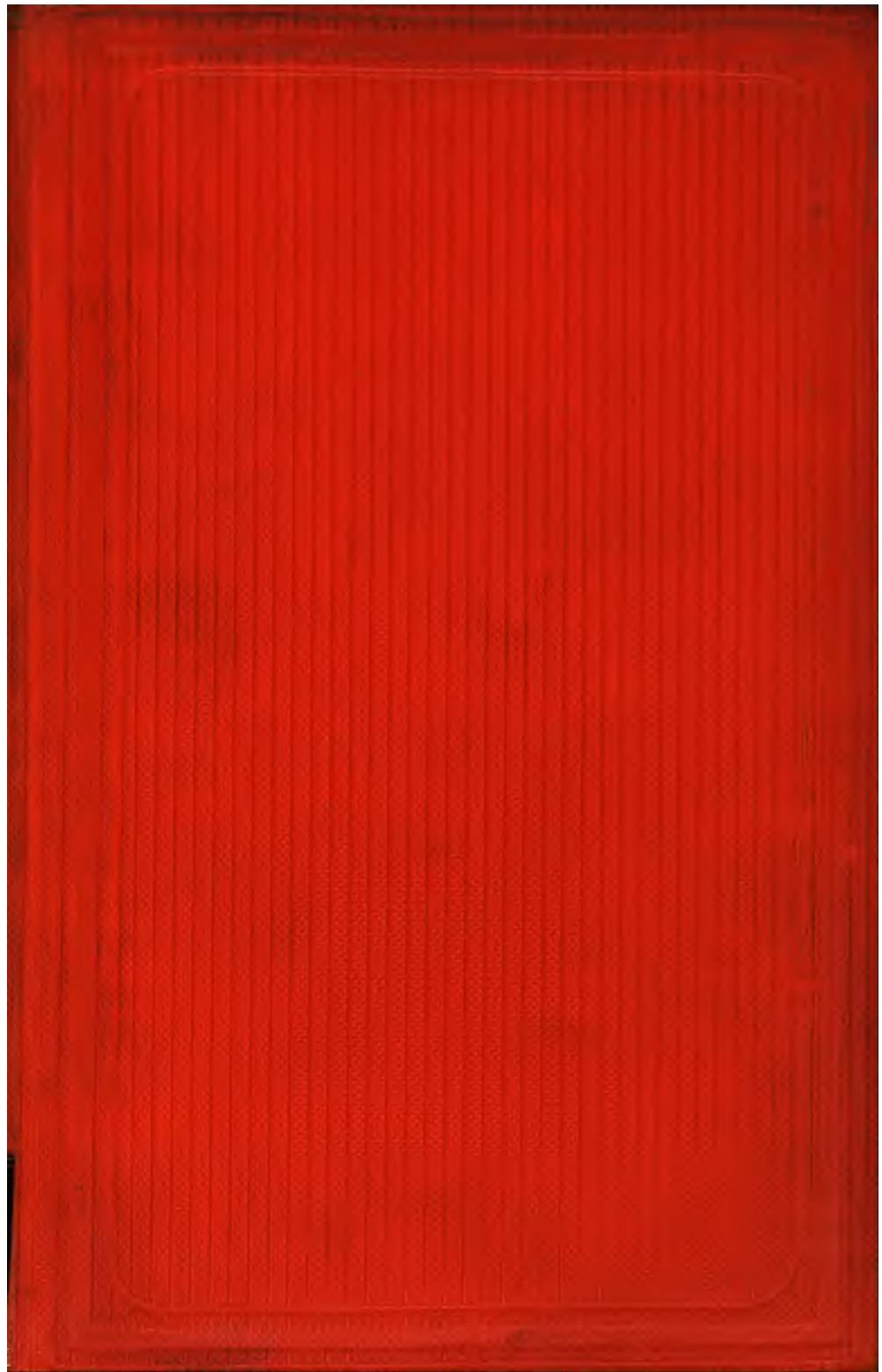
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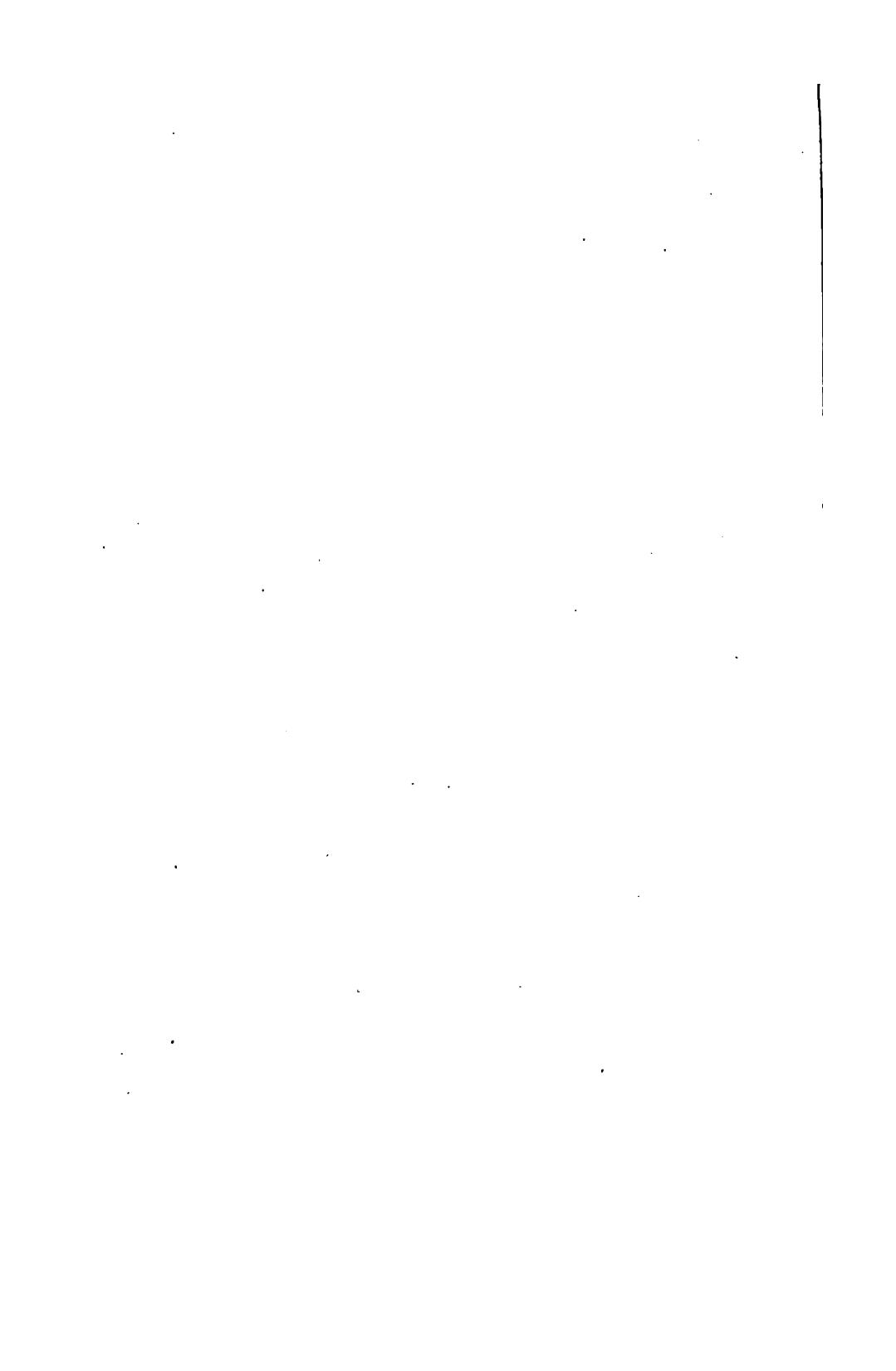




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# GUILTY; OR, NOT GUILTY.

A NOVEL.

BY

MRS. GORDON SMYTHIES,

AUTHOR OF

“COUSIN GEOFFREY,” “TRUE TO THE LAST,”

&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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## GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY.

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### CHAPTER I.

“ Oh ! 'tis not, Hinda, in the power  
Of Fancy's most terrific touch  
To paint thy pangs in that dread hour,  
Thy silent agony—'twas such  
As those who feel could paint full well;  
But none e'er felt and liv'd to tell.”

LALLA ROOKH.

EDITH, while Lady Ida was consulting with Phœbe about her dress for that evening, and while her father was still hidden-up behind the *Times*, hastily put on her hat and cloak, and slipped unperceived down-stairs into the drawing-room, and through the conservatory into the garden.

She had glanced at a splendid French clock that stood on the mantel-piece in the

state drawing-room, and saw with dismay that it was already so late that it would require the utmost speed on her part for her to reach the Dunstanburgh Flats in time to prevent the duel she so dreaded. Poor Edith ! she hurried along as though life (and, more than life—all that made life dear) depended on her speed ; she was in the Black Wood almost before she knew how she got there. As she passed the little grassy amphitheatre enclosed by the evergreens, which were now much taller, darker, and more umbrageous than at the time of her uncle's murder, she glanced nervously at the spot ; for even in childhood, and in company with Arthur and the little Crofts, she could never pass the place where she had been told that the foul murder had been done, without a shudder and a dread. And now she was alone in the Black Wood, and she heard (from within the fence formed by the closely interlaced and intertwined branches of those

dark evergreens) a sob and a moan ! Terror-stricken, she stood transfixed, while a sudden gust of wind raised and blew aside a dark bough, and revealed to her view a wild, hairy-looking man, grizzled, rudely clad, and middle-aged, and by his side a tall, dark woman, with the remains of great beauty of form and face, but barefoot and careworn. Both were travel-stained and ragged.

“ ‘Twas here he fell, Mary,” said the man ; “ but well ye know ‘twas no shot from my gun —the first gun he ever fired off, and that I tached him to fire off, and he loved as a boy, as he never loved his own Manton in after life —it was no shot from that gun, that laid him low. But I’ve been a poor hunted, luckless victim from that hour, Mary ; nothing has prospered with yer poor Rob ! Oh ! why did I flee, like a guilty thing, and leave a bad name behind me—a murderer’s name ? I’d be glad to be taken and tried now.”

“ Oh, Rob, Rob !” said his poor wife, “ ye’ll break my heart wid yer wild talk ! Come away wid me. Ye’ll be taken here, as the young lord—leastways, as was young then—tould me ; and ye’ll be hanged, and I’ll not live to see it.”

“ And that’s all the rason I haven’t give myself up years ago, Mary,” said Rough Rob ; “ for if ever a man had an angel sent him in the shape of a wife, that angel was you, Mary. Oh, the good, kind, blessed help and comfort you’ve been to me !”

Edith had no time to hear more. She had had but one glimpse of the pair—Rough Rob kneeling on the spot where the young lord had fallen, knuckling the tears out of his eyes, and Mary bending over him and weeping on his shoulder. The same gust of wind that revealed that scene, by raising the dark bough, had the next instant closed it in again ; but Edith, who had often heard from the poor on

the Rockalpine estate, and from the servants at the Castle and at Rock Villa, every detail connected with her uncle's murder, was familiar with the names of Rough Rob and his wife Mary, and felt that she gazed on the supposed murderer. The thought added to her anxiety to get out of the Black Wood as soon as possible. To prevent the impending duel she had sped along like one pursued, but she found terror was able to add wings to her feet, when, looking back at the scene of the murder, she saw Rough Rob's unshorn face peering out through the dark boughs of the wall of evergreens, and soon after beheld him and his tall Mary moving towards her. With the swiftness of the roe she gained the purple moor, pitying, as she did so, every hare and deer, and every other hunted thing; for she felt at that moment what it is to be pursued—what it is to fly for your life.

She reached the sea-beach in safety; it

was low water. She crept behind a rock, and looked round at the Black Wood. She saw Rough Rob and his wife emerge from it, and prepare to cross the moor; but—angel of mercy!—to her inexpressible relief, she sees them moving rapidly on in the opposite direction!

She had felt a wild terror, lest, seeing her, they should imagine they might be detected, and that Rough Rob, whom she had always heard of as a bloodthirsty and savage murderer, might kill her, to prevent the possibility of her betraying him.

With a fervent thanksgiving for her rescue from an imaginary peril, which, to her, had seemed so imminent and appalling, Edith hurried along the smooth, hard, shining sands, and picked her way among the dwarf rocks.

The task of getting to Dunstanburgh Flats, by the short cut which she remembered so

well, was far more difficult than it had been in her childhood. Great pieces of rock had fallen, and blocked up the once familiar pathway.

There were large, deep pools of clear salt water, in which the dark seaweed, with its translucent leaves and round pods floated, and where the young crabs sidled. Over some of these pools Edith was able to jump, but others were so broad she was compelled to wade through them.

The dread and the terror of being too late was busy at her heart, and the fear that she had lost her way, maddened her with anxiety; when suddenly two bare-legged boys, whose brown skins, glittering black eyes, raven hair, and wild garb, betrayed the gipsy, and who had been crab-hunting, appeared among the rocks. Edith knew that a gipsy's tent had for some time been pitched on the heath, and that Madge—Gipsy Madge, who, before she went

abroad, had told Arthur's fortune, and prophesied that he would wear a coronet, and live in a castle—had been seen in the Black Wood. She imagined that these boys were Madge's, or, at least, of the tribe, and hastening towards them, she cried out,

“Am I going right for Dunstanburgh Flats?”

The boys returned no answer ; they appeared to be making with all speed for the village. Edith got up to them. They were lividly pale, and the younger one was crying bitterly.

“What's the matter, my little man ?” said Edith.

The boys were silent.

“Am I far from the Flats ?” she asked.

“Oh, leddy ! gang na' to the Flats,” said the elder boy.

“Why not ?” said Edith.

“There’s murder has jist been dune up there. Jock and I wor hid up behint the rocks, looking for crabs, when we saw twa lairds coming that gate ; and as ane stoupit down to pick up a shell, t’other hit un a heavy blow *here*, with a knobbed stick, about the ear, and he fell down like a stane, and t’other fell to, and repated the blow, till his brain wor all aboot the rocks, and he stark. Oh, gang na’ to the Flats, leddy ! He’ll maybe serve you the like. We’ve creepit awa’ to get bock hame—we’re so afeard.”

But Edith knew no fear. What if her beloved, her betrothed Arthur, had been murdered by Roger Croft or the Marquis ?

She gained the Flats. Ah ! what a cry burst from her very heart ! There lay the dead body of the young Marquis of Dunstanburgh, Roger Croft kneeling beside him, and Arthur Bertram vainly struggling in the grasp of

three men, who were binding him, and preparing to lead him away.

“Arthur! dear Arthur!” cried Edith, rushing up to him ; “what is this ?”

“Lady Edith,” cried Roger, hoarse with passion, “this is no place for you—no scene for you. The Marquis of Dunstanburgh came here alone. I saw him alive at the Abbey an hour ago. It seems that Arthur Bertram, there, and he, were going to fight a duel. I find my friend, and butchered, as you see, and no one near but that ruffian !”

“He is no ruffian—he is no murderer!” cried Edith. “My life upon it, he is innocent!”

“Heaven bless you, my angel Edith!” cried Arthur Bertram. “I call God to witness I am innocent. I came here alone; *unarmed*, to persuade Lord Dunstanburgh not to risk making himself or me a murderer or an outcast. I found him butchered as you see, and

quite dead; but I had no hand in his death, Edith, so help me Heaven!"

"I believe you, dearest," cried Edith; "and I know Heaven *will* help you!"

## CHAPTER II.

“Alas! the love of woman! it is known  
To be a lovely and a fearful thing,  
For all of hers upon that die is thrown.”

BYRON.

GREAT, indeed, was the excitement felt not only in Northumberland, but throughout the British empire, when it became known that the young Marquis of Dunstanburgh had been murdered.

As yet little was known of his real nature; he was too young to have taken any very active part in politics, or as a landlord, but what little bias he had shown was towards a spirit of “Liberal Conservatism”—no contradiction in terms, for there are such things as

liberal Conservatives and illiberal Radicals. His own party had expected a good deal of him, for he had a good deal in his power, and generally those who want nothing have a good deal forced upon them. As a great land-owner, everything that he had done, since his majority (only of nine months' standing) had been popular. He had generous impulses and a strong will; he had lowered the rents of some of his tenants, and had raised none. His tenants, judging from this, thought they had lost in him an excellent landlord, and their grief and indignation were very great indeed.

Public reprobation set in like a tide against Arthur Bertram. Even before the coroner's inquest had been held, every one seemed to take it for granted that he had done this base and cruel murder—done it of malice prepense—under the influence of jealousy and revenge, perhaps, also, of disappointed love; for the name of Lady Edith Lorraine began to be

whispered about as connected with this dreadful tragedy. And again scraggy necks (much scraggier than before) were stretched, and again quaint old heads (now palsied) met over the tea-tables at Rockalpine and at Alnwick; and though Death had thinned the ranks (which Time, however, was beginning to fill up from another generation), again the memory of Clarissa Croft was assailed, and old trembling hands, thin and with knotted joints and veins, like blue cordage, raked up her ashes, and the old scandal was revived, and the same bitter tongues that had blamed the former Lady Rockalpine for bringing up Clarissa Croft with her sons, now anathematized the present Countess for having placed the Lady Edith in Mr. Croft's family, and brought about all this evil by promoting, what the Hon. Melissa Trumpington, head of the spinster coterie, called "unequal intimacies," and "an improper fusion of the patrician and ple-

beian elements; and, in short, a dangerous domestication of a young lady of high rank (an Earl's daughter) with a low-born agent's bastard grandson!"

Even among the poor of Rockalpine and its neighbourhood (where Arthur and Edith were known and loved), no doubt of the young man's guilt was entertained; but horror of his crime was mixed up with intense pity for the disappointed love, the jealous anguish, the despair, which, they agreed, must have maddened him into the commission of so dreadful a crime.

Lady Rockalpine was vehement in her denunciations of the base-born, black-hearted assassin, as she called Arthur Bertram, and in her lamentations over the aristocratic, handsome, noble-hearted young Marquis.

The Earl was paler, more silent, and more reserved than ever. The word "MURDER" was a knell to his heart; the question

“GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY” shook his very soul, and palsied him with a vague, ever-haunting dread.

Roger Croft was become quite popular at the Castle and with the Countess of Rockalpine, because he was so furious against the MURDERER, so anxious to bring him to justice, and because he expressed such passionate and disconsolate grief at the dreadful fate of him whom he called his noble patron and beloved friend. He always came to the Castle dressed in the deepest mourning, and armed with a large, white, clerical, cambric pocket-handkerchief, in which he buried his face when any allusion was made to the Marquis and his terrible fate.

The Lady Ida, whose solitary affection was for a very unworthy object—namely, her brother, Lord Hauteville—spent her time in vain endeavours to reclaim him, and to make the Castle less dull and wearisome to him. And

Edith, who had been brought back—she knew not how—from Dunstanburgh Flats, in a syncope which had succeeded to the terrible excitement of the scene of blood, was lying, prostrated by despair, on her couch in her darkened room ; now, wild with terror as she thought of the possibility, nay, the probability, that her beloved Arthur might be tried, condemned, and executed for a crime, of which she felt that he was innocent; now, melting into tears over the memory of the happy past ; now, kneeling in fervent prayer to Him who alone could succour and save him.

The momentous question of “GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY,” never for one moment occurred to her mind. She felt as certain of her Arthur’s innocence as of her own. Terrible and dark suspicions were fast growing into certainties, as she thought upon all the circumstances connected with his ghastly murder.

But while her heart throbbed, and her

cheek burned with indignation, at the idea of Arthur's being even suspected of so foul a crime, reason would be heard, a chill would creep over her, and she would grow cold and white, as the circumstantial evidence rose up in such irresistible force, that she was obliged to own to her own heart, that, were any other than Arthur concerned, her judgment would pronounce a very different verdict.

The coroner's inquest was held at Dunstanburgh Abbey, on the very day preceding that fixed for the old Earl's funeral. Edith had heard from Phœbe of the important investigation, and at what hour it was to take place. She did not appear to take much notice of the announcement when Phœbe, full of news, brought it to her.

She still lay on her bed, white, wan, listless, and dishevelled, as she had been for forty-eight hours; but anyone who had

watched her closely, would have seen the colour rush to her pale cheeks, tears sparkle in her large, dark, sleepless eyes, a proud resolve animate her languid form, and her little hand close, as with some strong determination. Still she said nothing.

Phœbe, who was a good, sympathising, feeling girl, brought a tempting breakfast, on a tray covered with a snow-white damask cloth, and placed it on a little table by Edith's bedside. Since Arthur had been taken prisoner on suspicion of the young Marquis's murder, Edith had not broken her fast.

She had not attempted to rise, to dress herself, or to arouse herself, in any way, from the torpor of grief and despair, which had succeeded to her deep swoon on Dunstanburgh Flats.

Phœbe, whose constant opinion was that her young mistress was crossed in love, and was not quite right in her mind, left the room,

“Which way are you going, friend?” asked Edith.

“To Dunstanburgh Abbey, lady,” said the man. “I have to drive there, for one as is on the inquest.”

“I will make it worth your while to drive very quick,” said Edith; and seating herself by the man’s side, they set off as fast as the cob’s short legs could carry them.

“This here’s a ghastly murder—ain’t it, lady?” said the man.

“It is, indeed,” faltered Edith.

“Have you heerd the rights on it, lady?” asked her companion.

“Yes—no—I don’t know,” said Edith trembling.

“If you has, lady, no one else hasn’t; but I’ve formed my opinion—leastways my wife has, which she always selects an opinion for I, and she ain’t often wrong either, she ain’t—and we don’t hold with them as thinks that

young Arthur Bertram done this murder."

"Oh, I'm so glad to hear you say so!" exclaimed Edith. "But what will the jury say?"

"Oh, they'll find him guilty, and no mistake. *They* mostly gets the wrong sow by the ear, lady—begging your pardon for speaking so free—they can't see an inch beyond their nose, not they. They'll find a innocent man guilty and commit him for murder, and blight his life, and break his heart, and the heart of the wife of his buzzom. They goes by appearances, which it's nine times out of ten they goes agin the innocent and in favour of the guilty."

"Ah, but," said Edith, "*the truth is great, and will prevail. The innocent may suffer for a time, but in the long run they are justified, and the guilty brought to shame and punishment.*"

Edith started—the chaise stopped short in the middle of the road—the strange rough man by her side fell on his knees, as he sobbed out

—for his tears gushed forth like rain, while he held her hands in his—“Bless you, bless you, lady, for these words! ‘The innocent *shall* be justified, and the guilty brought to shame and punishment.’ Oh, the comfort of those words to a poor hunted cretur, victim of another’s erime! Them words ’ll gladden my poor girl’s heart, too—it’s well nigh broke—we’ve borne a heavy burden so long. Oh, lady, if angels ever were made without wings, which we knows ain’t loikely, I’d believe you was one!” He then resumed his seat, and drove on; and Edith, not a little frightened at his vehemence, and doubting his sanity, remained silent until they came in view of a noble pile—the antique Abbey of Dunstanburgh—standing in a beautiful park. And Edith shudder’d to think, as the sunlight flashed from the windows, whose blinds were all drawn down, and the fir-trees waved in the breeze, how sightless were the eyes, how still the

form, of the young lord of that noble mansion!

Edith could not choose but weep, when she recollected how he had loved her, how the cheek now cold and pale in death had glowed at her approach, how he had ever tried to please her, how generous he had been to old Hackney-Coach, how kind to Arthur; and now, cut off in the bloom and spring of life, to be lying, cruelly butchered, in his own ancestral halls!

At this moment a loud yell—a horrible yell of triumph and execration—reached Edith's ear; and she beheld a crowd assembled at the park gates, and perceived that the discordant noise she had heard was called forth by the appearance at a little distance of a fly, with a policeman on the box.

“That's their way with any poor hunted cretur that's accuged,’ right or wrong; they never stops to ask themselves, ‘*Now mightn't he be innocent?*’ Oh, no; the unenlightened

brutes never thinks what's going on in his poor thumping heart! Oh, them howls! I knows 'em well. I've heerd 'em afore, and so has my poor gal, the worse luck; and so we may again," he muttered to himself. "And if it is to be, I only wish it wor over. If it worn't for Moll and her grief, I'd be thankful to be hanged out of this misery."

"I will get down here," said Edith, putting some silver into the man's hand, and springing from the chaise.

She took a path that led away from the park entrance to a little postern-gate in the wall of a large fruit-garden—a gate well known to her in former days, when she was the little carroty cripple at Rockalpine. For the old head-gardener was very fond of Arthur and herself, and would often give them cuttings of geraniums, when he was pruning the plants, and fill their basket with any fruit that happened to be in season.

This little postern-gate was a good way from the entrance to the park, but yet Edith could distinctly hear the yells of execration that filled the air; and her heart sank, and her soul sickened, for she knew they were called forth by the arrival of Arthur, the supposed murderer.

## CHAPTER III.

“ All tongues accuse him, and all hearts condemn;  
I know him innocent, and here I hurl  
My curse, my deep anathema, on them  
Who seek to crush and stain my priceless pearl!  
Has he but one on earth to cling to—one unhappy girl?”  
LASCELLES.

HALF FAINTING with the violence of her emotions, Edith sunk on the step of the door in the wall. Here the poor girl sat for some time, rocking herself to and fro in her despair, when a loud and prolonged repetition of the groans and howls of the mob roused her, and starting to her feet, she knocked at the little door in the wall. As no answer came, Edith, who in former times had known how to open

it (when neither locked or bolted inside), lifted the latch, and found herself in the deserted fruit-garden. The old gardener, who was much attached to the family, and to his young lord especially, was among the crowd assembled to receive the accused with groans, yells, and hisses.

Edith Lorraine sank down on a bench near the gardener's door. The yells of execration which reached her ear, made her heart beat and her cheek burn. She knew that it was her Arthur's arrival that called them forth. Indeed, had not the police interfered, the mob would have torn Arthur to pieces.

“Down with the bastard!—the blood-thirsty, ungrateful bastard! Down with Arthur Bertram!” cried one.

“Rather say *up* with him,” said another; “up as high as the gibbet, at any rate!”

“ Set a beggar on horseback, and we all know whither he’ll ride !” cried a third.

Edith could not repress a burst of scalding tears as she thought of what Arthur must feel —her noble, delicate, sensitive Arthur ! She figured him to herself, worn, jaded, weary, pallid, with one hectic spot on each cheek.

“ Oh ! I hope he will keep the tears back, and not let them fill his beloved, beautiful eyes,” she said to herself. “ It would be such a triumph to those ruffians to make him weep !”

All was still ; no sound louder than the wind among the leafless trees was to be heard. Edith felt certain that the examination—on which so much depended for her beloved, and therefore for her—was going on.

“ Why am I *here?*” she said to herself ; “ why do I shrink like a coward from the

part it is my duty to play ? How often has his brave daring saved my life? And now that he has more than twenty lives at stake, I am afraid to do and say my little all to help him! What do I fear ?—a sneer, a stare, a smile, a jeer ? And shall *they* weigh in the balance against Arthur's life—his honour ? No ; forbid it, love and constancy !”

Edith rose, pale but resolved, and made her way through the fruit-garden, the shrubbery, and the parterre, to the Abbey. There were people outside, and among them was a policeman. Edith spoke to him in a whisper. He knew who she was ; he listened with great deference to what she said, and at once making way for her to pass, ushered her into the dining-hall, where the coroner's inquest was sitting. Large as was the hall, it was crowded. The jury had just returned from viewing the body in the adjoining room, the library. Where

Edith stood, she could see into that room as the last juryman left it. For one instant, before the door was closed, Edith distinctly beheld THE CORPSE ! A woman in attendance almost instantly drew a sheet over the convulsed, discoloured features and the rigid form, but that glimpse of one who had died a violent death, often reappeared to poor Edith in her day and night dreams—a ghastly sight of horror and of dread, never, never to be effaced from her memory !

A good deal of surprise was felt and expressed at the absence of old Lawyer Croft ; and certainly as he never failed to attend inquests much less important, and always took a prominent part in them, it was a singular and mysterious circumstance. The fact was, that late the night before, while waiting alone in his dressing-room, and in his wrapper, his son Roger had suddenly appeared before him, and had hurriedly informed him that Lord

Rockalpine, who was at Sunderland on private business of great importance connected with the murder of the young Marquis, required his immediate attendance. Roger added that, as his trap was at the door, he would drive his father down to B——, where a boat, which would at once convey him to Sunderland, was awaiting him.

“I must be back in time for the inquest,” said old Croft.

“So you shall, and no mistake,” said Roger; adding, *sotto voce*, “if you are, old cock, I’m a greater fool than I take myself for.”

In ten minutes they set out together.

Roger Croft was present at the inquest. He kept his handkerchief almost constantly to his eyes, and frequently seemed almost convulsed and overpowered by his grief. He had not as yet perceived Edith, who, in her garden hat, a double gossamer veil over her pale face,

and her form shrouded in a thick and ample black cloak, stood among the crowd at the entrance, a tall policeman by her side, and the strange, rough man who had brought her to the Abbey in the pony-chaise standing before her, his broad shoulders completely concealing her from the more select and aristocratic portion of the audience at the upper end of the large dining-hall.

The jury having, as we have said, examined the body, and heard the report of the surgeon who had made the *post-mortem* examination, a rigid investigation commenced.

Oh ! how Edith's heart throbbed, and how her cheeks flushed, and her eyes flashed through their tears when Arthur was led in between two policemen ! It had been a dull and sunless day, but at that moment the sun came out, and a golden gush of light passing through the stained glass windows, settled

like a halo round the noble head, and pale  
but princely face of Arthur Bertram, THE AC-  
CUSED.

## CHAPTER IV.

“ Why do you use me thus? ”

HAMLET.

How wonderful is the effect of “the human face divine” (when it really deserves that epithet) on the minds of men, and more so still, on those of women!

As Arthur Bertram stood erect, his arms folded, his countenance pale, and, “more in sorrow than in anger,” meeting with a clear, fearless, unclouded eye, and a frank, open brow, the flushed, frowning faces of the Jury, the witnesses, and the crowd, a change of feeling in his favour passed like electricity from heart to heart—a doubt of his guilt was busy

in every bosom. Everyone instinctively felt that these were not the mien, the bearing, the face, of a vile, a cowardly assassin. And yet, as the investigation proceeded, how irresistible became the force of the circumstantial evidence against him !

The witnesses were very few, but their examination and cross-examination by the prisoner occupied a long time. The principal one was Roger Croft.

He deposed that the late Marquis of Dunstanburgh—one of his oldest and dearest friends, his schoolfellow at Eton, his intimate at college, his travelling companion abroad, and his inseparable associate at home—had confided to him that he had unfortunately provoked a quarrel with the young man of the name of Arthur Bertram.

In reply to a question by one of the Jurymen, Roger Croft, with apparent unwillingness, acknowledged that Arthur Bertram was a re-

lation of his own—an illegitimate child of his father's only daughter by his first wife, Clarissa Croft.

As Roger Croft lisped out this venom, Arthur was observed to turn, first very red, and then very pale, to clench his fist, and to fix his flashing eyes on Roger, who averted his sly and snake-like glance, and grew livid with rage and terror.

Roger Croft proceeded to say, that from early boyhood there had been great ill-will on the part of the prisoner towards the noble, the warm-hearted, but rash and demonstrative deceased. Croft averred (how falsely!) that the Marquis had early maintained that a boy of the unfortunate and disgraceful birth of the accused had no right at Eton, at Oxford, and among the youthful nobility and gentry of the land.

“I mention these circumstances, Mr. Foreman, and gentlemen of the Jury,” lisped Roger

Croft, “out of no ill-will to the miserable assassin—I beg pardon, I would *prejudge* no one—I mean the miserable accused; for, though the loss of the noble friend who was to me as a brother, has well-nigh broken my heart, I love justice better than I loved my friend; and if the prisoner’s guilt admits of a doubt, I know our merciful laws, administered by a Jury of enlightened Englishmen, will give him the benefit of that doubt. But that there was ill-will on the part of the prisoner from a very early age, does not admit of a question.”

Here Roger Croft was calmly and coldly cross-examined by the prisoner, and the facts elicited were—that the enmity that *had* existed at Eton, was between Roger Croft and himself, not between the young Marquis of Dunstanburgh—then Lord Pontecraft—and himself; that on one memorable occasion there was a fight of two hours’ duration at Eton, between Roger Croft of fifteen, and Arthur Bertram of

twelve, in which fight Roger Croft's front teeth were broken. Of this all present had evidence, both in the gap in Roger's ugly mouth, and in the thick lisp with which he spoke. Arthur added that on that occasion the late Marquis had threatened to cut Roger Croft for fighting so small a boy, had called him a coward and a bully, and had presented Arthur with a watch —his own watch, the young lord's first watch —inside the silver case of which he had himself scratched with his penknife—

“By this watch, A. B. of 12, fought R. C. of 15, two hours, and licked him well.

“PONTECRAFT.”

The watch was here handed to the Jury.

Roger Croft here wanted to know whether all this “bosh and boast,” as he called it, was not perfectly irrelevant. The Foreman remarked that it was, of course, important to the accused to disprove the assertion that

evil feeling and ill-will had long been smouldering in his breast against the noble deceased.

“Mr. Foreman, and gentlemen of the Jury,” said Arthur (and oh! how every tone of his dear, well-known voice woke the echoes of Edith’s heart), “there was no ill-will, no bad feeling, between the late lamented deceased and myself. So far from it, on one occasion, at Interlachen, when an effort of mine to save the life of a young lady of our travelling party was crowned with success, and his lordship thought I had shown some bravery in risking my worthless life to save that of the lady in question, he generously offered me his interest, his patronage, and pecuniary assistance to any amount necessary to my attaining any object in life on which I had set my heart.”

“Gentlemen of the Jury,” lisped Roger Croft, “the Munchausen-like adventures of one who draws such a very long bow as Mr.

Arthur Bertram does, will take up your time and mine till *Bull's Noon*. Will it be out of course for me to ask him whether or not he had any quarrel with the late lamented deceased?—whether there was not a *delicate* cause of bitter rivalry and enmity between them?—whether the late Marquis had not struck him on one occasion, and threatened to horsewhip him?—and whether he did not go to Dunstanburgh Flats in answer to a challenge from his lordship—a challenge to bring with him a second, and fight a duel with pistols on the Flats?"

To each of these questions, as put by the Foreman, Arthur Bertram was compelled by truth to reply in the affirmative; but while they were put, he was repeatedly warned that he was *not bound to criminate himself*, or to answer any question tending to that effect.

"Mr. Foreman," said Arthur, in a loud, clear voice, and with a heightened colour,

“allow me, once for all, and with due deference, to say, *that* advice is thrown away upon me. I *cannot* criminate myself, for I am innocent—as innocent as yourself, or any other man present—of this vile, base, and bloody murder! I call God to witness that I am innocent. To the question of “GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY,” I can, with my hand on my heart, and my eyes to the heavens and to the mountains, whence help may yet come, proclaim that I am innocent. *Yes, I am innocent, so help me God!*”

Here a juror asked why, if Mr. Arthur Bertram *meant* to fight *a duel* on the Flats, he went there without a second, and, as far as the evidence went, without pistols?

“I did *not* go there to fight a duel, gentlemen,” said Arthur Bertram. “I abhor duelling: *I consider it to be deliberate murder, with malice prepense.* I went to the Flats *unattended and unarmed*, and I meant to say

to the noble deceased" (and here Arthur deliberately turned, and fixed his eyes on Roger Croft, who, at the mention of *the deceased*, hid his face in his handkerchief), " 'My lord, a mean, venomous, lying slanderer has come between us. You struck me in an ungoverned moment, and I, in self-defence, knocked you down—we are quits; as man to man, I say, there let it rest. I honour God's commandments—I *will do no murder*. Let us calmly discuss the point at issue between us, and whatever man can do, in justice to himself and others, to meet your wishes and promote your views, I will do. But though I am not a Marquis, though you have branded me—as I believe, so help me Heaven! most unjustly—with the vile name of BASTARD, and thus blackened the name, and assailed the honour of my dead mother, I am ready to forgive all. Let us exchange forgiveness. But if you refuse to do so—if you still cling to a bar-

barous and now exploded code of honour, and compel me to stand before you at twelve paces, *I warn you that I shall fire in the air*, and that—if I fall—you will be a MURDERER! It is possible none but your own conscience will accuse you if I do fall—none will avenge *me*—perhaps none will inquire into the fate of the unhappy, nameless outcast; but I warn you (for you are not all evil), there is a judge who will condemn you, and that judge is—CONSCIENCE!' ”

A murmur of applause followed this excited outburst of Arthur Bertram's heart. It was instantly suppressed, and Roger Croft remarked, that all this was mere verbiage, and trifling with the Jury's valuable time; that it mattered very little what fine Christian oration Mr. Arthur Bertram had *meant* to address to the Marquis, since the matter lay in a nutshell. His late dear and noble friend had told him of a quarrel and personal con-

flict which had taken place, relative to a young lady and her picture, in the Black Wood of Rockalpine. (Here there was great evidence of interest.) That he, the late Marquis, considering his honour as a gentleman at stake, had asked him, Roger Croft, to be his second. That he, Roger Croft, not having the *very* high-flown notions of the accused about duelling, had agreed to be his lordship's second. That they were on their way to the spot agreed upon, when it struck him, Roger Croft, that, in case of an ~~accident~~, it would be very desirable to have a surgeon at hand ; and that, begging the Marquis to proceed to the Flats, he had hurried back as fast as he could to Dunstanburgh, to engage the services of Mr. Puckridge. Mr. Puckridge was not at home, but was expected every moment ; and he, Roger Croft, had left a message, begging him to come at once to the Flats. He had then hurried off to rejoin his noble friend,

whom he had left twenty minutes before in high health and spirits. Here Roger Croft covered his face with his handkerchief, and sobbed out,

“I never saw him alive again. He lay on the Flats, or rather in a chasm between them, a mangled corpse, and no one near him but the accused, who pretended to be *approaching* the spot.”

By a Juror,

“Was there any blood on the dress or person of the accused?”

“I cannot tell. At the horrible sight of my noble friend lying in a pool of blood, a dizziness came over me, and I sank down by his side. When I came to myself, I believe my cries reached the ears of two policemen who were on 'duty near the Flats. They took Bertram into custody—how could they do otherwise?”

The two policemen were here minutely

cross-examined, and their statement corresponded in all respects with that of Roger Croft.

The brows of the Jury darkened. The Foreman asked if there were no other witnesses.

Here, pale but resolute, Edith Lorraine, with the tall policeman clearing the way for her, came forward.

*“I am a witness for the accused,”* she cried; *“I am here to state all I know.”*

Roger Croft, livid with rage, scowled from beneath his flaxen eyebrows at the brave and noble girl.

Arthur Bertram’s colour rose to his temples; he started, and held out his hands as if to greet and bless her. It was but the impulse of a moment; the next he remembered himself, and drew back, murmuring,

“Heaven guide and reward thee, my angel Edith!”

By order of the Foreman, Lady Edith was at once accommodated with an arm-chair. She was firm, composed, and collected, although many of the nobility and gentry of the county were assembled there. She had but one object —to save her Arthur. Firmly convinced of his innocence, she was there at that terrible inquest, in the midst of that dense crowd, that ghastly and for ever still and silent one, close at hand !

Bravery in woman is always admired to enthusiasm by Englishmen ; and in Edith's bravery there was nothing masculine. There was not one iota of the “show off” of the Amazon, the heroine of romance, about *her*. She was perfectly simple, quiet, unaffected, dignified.

The Foreman requested her, with a deference due to her rank, her sex, and the sublime heroism of her bearing, to raise her veil. In doing so, Edith's large garden-hat fell off,

and she did not attempt to pick it up. Some gentlemen darted forward to do so; but Edith held it by the strings in her hand. She was not afraid that the searching rays of the sun should fall on her face; she had nothing to conceal—nothing of which she was ashamed. She gloried in her love for Arthur; and though, with true maiden modesty, she never alluded to the feeling that bound them together, in every word she spoke, she betrayed the reverence, the tenderness, the admiration, the confidence, which, in a true woman's heart, always are the attendants on LOVE.

And Edith sat in that high-backed, crimson-cushioned arm-chair, her long, rich, auburn hair dishevelled, and hanging in clusters on her shoulders; her expressive face, pale, save when a flush mantled it; her dark, splendid, violet eyes, now flashing fire, now shining through tears; her white, taper hands ungloved, and her graceful form draped by

her large, black velvet cloak. There was not a man present who did not gaze at her with intense admiration, which deepened as, by the wisdom of her remarks, the closeness of her natural logic, and the eloquence of her sweet tongue, she began to turn the tide in favour of her beloved Arthur. Oh! how her heart beat, how her cheeks burned, how her eyes brightened, and her hopes rose, as she fancied she perceived a bias in favour of a verdict not inculpating her Arthur!

She repeated, word for word, not sparing herself in the least, all she had overheard from the loft of the summer-house; but she took care not to mention the articles she had secreted there. She made no secret of the intense interest in Arthur which had taken her to the Flats to prevent the duel; and it was evident that the account of her meeting with the gipsy boys among the cliffs caused intense excitement in all present.

Arthur started to his feet (he had been allowed a seat), and, clasping his hands with a wild burst of joy, exclaimed,

“Thank God, thank God! there *were* witnesses there of that deed of blood and treachery!”

Roger Croft with a heavy groan fell back, and was carried insensible out of the hall.

The jury instructed the officers to institute a search for the gipsy boys, and the inquest was adjourned accordingly.

Lord Hauteville, who was present at the meeting, took charge of his sister, Lady Edith, back to the Castle. She stole to her own room, where, as soon as the news of her appearance at the inquest reached Lady Rockalpine, she was visited by a storm of maternal anger, reproach, and vituperation. Edith was ordered, on pain of her mother’s repudiation and eternal displeasure, not to attempt again to disgrace

her family by parading her devotion to a base-born murderer.

As all attempts to discover the gipsy boys had completely failed, and the proceedings could be postponed no longer in a case of such importance, the inquest had been resumed after a week's delay. Edith had done all she could do. The excitement over, her strength gave way; a succession of fainting-fits ensued, and at the time to which the inquest was postponed, Edith was lying dangerously ill with a low fever of a most alarming kind; and even her worldly and vindictive mother forbore the triumph of informing her that, in spite of all she had done and dared, the Coroner's inquest had returned a verdict of **WILFUL MURDER** against Arthur Bertram, and that he was committed to M—— gaol, to await his trial at the Spring Assizes.

\* \* \* \* \*

The old Earl of Rockalpine lay at rest in

the family vault. Mrs. Prosser, the house-keeper, was at ease in her mind. Her master (in spite of all the strange events that had crowded in) was conveyed, with all due pomp and parade, in the richly-plumed hearse, and followed by the full complement of mourning coaches, to his last long home. The day of the funeral was one of intense agony to the new Earl. He could not avoid seeing his brother's coffin when his father's was lowered into the vault. Lord Hauteville behaved with due decorum. The poor, to whom of late the Earl had been so true a friend, wept and wailed; but Edith—the only real mourner of the family—was lying between life and death, unable to follow her benefactor to the grave, as she had meant to do, and quite unconscious that those bells tolled for him.

After the funeral the will was read. *Mr. Croft was still absent.*

The will produced was that made when Lord

Hauteville was a boy, and by which the late Earl left to *him* all his real and personal property ; all, in fact, that was not entailed on his son—all that, by the subsequent will in Edith's favour (so mysteriously abstracted, and, like old Croft, not forthcoming), ought to have been Edith's.

Lord Hauteville, who had only awaited the reading of this will, no sooner became aware of its contents, than he took his leave, repaired at once to the Mill Cottage, where Marion had wisely resolved quietly to await his return, and where, dressed to great advantage, and in high beauty, she expected his restoration to his senses and to her.

Lord Hauteville, in high good-humour at his accession of wealth, promised his ambitious and delighted bride to take her at once to London, to purchase a suitable *trousseau*, to publish their marriage, and to introduce her as Lady Hauteville.

That very afternoon she was seen at the \_\_\_\_\_ Station, her beauty making her the object of universal attention, even to an old traveller, who, in gazing upon her, got his foot under a truck, and swore and roared lustily.

Off she goes in a first-class carriage, Lord Hauteville (for the nonce) quite a model husband. How long this will last we will not presume to prophesy; but a vain, unprincipled, ambitious woman of the lower orders, and a profligate, dissipated young nobleman, never *did* form a happy marriage, and, we believe, never can, and never will.

## CHAPTER V.

“Good Heaven, whose darling attribute, we find,  
Is boundless grace and mercy to mankind,  
Abhors the cruel, and the deeds of night  
By wondrous ways reveals in open light.  
Murder may pass unpunished for a time,  
But tardy justice will o’ertake the crime.”

ANON.

THE Earl of Rockalpine had pleaded indisposition, and had taken to his bed, to account for and excuse his non-attendance at the inquest on the body of the young Marquis of Dunstanburgh. All the noblemen and gentlemen in the neighbourhood took an intense interest in this horrible and ghastly murder of a young Peer, so powerful, so popular, so beloved, and so unoffending ; and indeed, but for his affected

indisposition, the absence of the nearest neighbour—the head of the family most intimate with the deceased nobleman—must have caused great remark, and general surprise and disapprobation.

A murder of any kind always awoke countless demons in the breast of the new Earl of Rockalpine. CONSCIENCE (seldom in a very deep sleep in his breast) arose, and awoke Remorse, Terror, Horror, Despair, Anguish! The bed—the grand state bed—the downy bed, with its purple-velvet hangings, its coronet, its supporters (which formed the bed-posts), its swelling pillows edged with lace, its fine snowy linen sheets, so delicately frilled, its fragrance, and its costly luxury—all yielded no ease, no comfort, no rest, no sleep, to THE FRATRICIDE! To him, it was that bed of thorns which a guilty conscience always spreads, whether in castle or cottage, hall or hovel—on the narrow pallet and flock mattress of Poverty or on

the stubble down and under the gorgeous canopy of Rank and Wealth. Vainly he tried to rest his throbbing, hot, and aching head on those swelling and downy pillows ; serpents seemed to him to creep from beneath them, to coil around them, and to raise their horrid heads and fix their cold eyes on him, and to hiss in his ear the word “FRATRICIDE !”

He was alone—quite alone—always alone, whether in the solitude of a crowd, or that of his own chamber.

Nothing so isolates the heart, the mind, the soul of man, as the consciousness of an unsuspected, unacknowledged crime. He who has a secret which no one *can* share, ghastly memories of horror and guilt, not buried, but hidden in the dark recesses of his soul—he whose whole life is haunted by terrors of which no living being has any knowledge or conception—what intimacy, what sympathy, what friendship can he enjoy ? He knows, he feels,

that the very men who court, and praise, and honour him, and who bewail his being so very reserved, and silent, and inaccessible, would, if they knew what he had done, turn from him with horror and loathing, and perhaps be the very first to give him up to justice. He felt that his whole life was one lie ; for what else were the reforms, the charities, the philanthropic undertakings, the moral lectures, the pious speeches, schemes, speculations, and plans of a Murderer—a Fratricide ?

Poor wretch ! As he lay in his darkened room on the first day of the inquest, how the pale ghosts of the Past thronged his chamber, and seemed to gather round his bed ! He had taken latterly to opium, morphia, and other strong sedatives, to stupefy Conscience, paralyse Memory, and lull Thought to rest. Alas ! even the sleep these narcotics produced was haunted by hideous visions, dreams, and nightmares ; and the reaction was so terrible as to

resemble madness, and often to tempt him to suicide !

He had just swallowed a strong dose of opium, and had given orders that he might not be disturbed. He need not have feared interruption. There was nothing of the sweet officiousness of woman's love in his vain, cold, fashionable wife. Edith, who felt for all who lived, and whose feelings of filial duty were so deep and strong—Edith, had she been at home, would probably have knocked at her father's door, to know if she could do anything to comfort and to cheer him. But the reader knows where Edith was on the first day of the inquest ; and in her absence no one approached the Earl's chamber.

Alas ! alas ! much as he dreaded the ghoul and ghost-haunted solitude of that chamber of horrors, he dreaded still more the outer world, where, in the broad daylight, people were, as he well knew, gathering in knots, and talking,

with pale faces and bated breath, of the murder on the Flats, and comparing it with that ghastly deed of blood in the Black Wood, of five-and-twenty years ago. He felt an instinctive consciousness that the comparison of those two foul and bloody murders *must* suggest itself to every mind. There were such strong points of similarity in the two crimes. The age of the victims was the same. Both were noble, both in the early prime of manhood. Both were so popular, so beloved, that neither could have been supposed ever to have made an enemy, or to have excited the ill-will of any human being. And yet both were murdered in the open face of day, on their own ancestral estates ; and in both cases suspicion fell on innocent men.

Rough Rob was (as the livid, quaking Earl too well knew) perfectly innocent of the crime of which the verdict at the inquest found him guilty, and for which he was committed to

M—— gaol. And the Earl of Rockalpine felt a strong, an irresistible conviction, that Arthur Bertram was as guiltless of this deed of blood and guilt as Rough Rob was of that ghastly murder in the Black Wood, twenty-five long years ago. And yet the same verdict of Wilful Murder was recorded against him, and he was now lying in the same gaol from which Rough Rob had escaped.

Oh ! what a mockery was this ! What a moral does this great man's abject fate convey ! What power have Title, Rank, Wealth, Power, Reputation, if the conscience is burdened with a secret crime ?

The state bed shakes, the purple velvet hangings quiver, for the wretched inmate of that costly bed, the great and potent Lord of Rockalpine, is writhing with Remorse, palsied with Despair, quaking with abject Terror !

Sons of Labour, slaves of the Loom, or of the Soil ! sleep—sleep soundly on your truckle

beds, if “the princely heart of innocence” beats in your breasts ; and if, on some brief holiday, you read this “ower true tale,” compare your state with that of guilty Grandeur, and go forth to your daily toil for your daily bread, content!

Towards evening the wretched Earl of Rockalpine, worn out with the agony of his mind, and overcome by the fumes of the opium he had swallowed, sank into a troubled, nightmare-ridden sleep. It seemed to him, that he awoke with a start from a vivid dream of early days of love—of his brother Hauteville, of his mother, the fair Countess of Rockalpine, and of that beautiful Clarissa Croft, her *protégée*, whom both himself and his brother had so madly loved. He fancied that he awoke with a start from this dream, and sat up in his bed ; when a stream of moonlight gushed through some round holes in the closed shutters of his windows, filling the centre of

the room with a slanting column of silvery light, and flooding with radiance the rich carpet of velvet pile.

The moonlight was odious to the guilty man, and he was about to spring out of bed, to draw the purple velvet window-curtains close, and exclude its radiance, when a cold wind seemed to pass over his face and person, and an invisible hand to force him back upon his pillow. And then he fancied that while he lay there, icy cold, damp with horror, and perfectly motionless and powerless, three forms, larger, younger, and, if possible, more beautiful than those he had just seen in his dream, and known in life, appeared in that column of moonlight—first as faint outlines, and then, by degrees, as maturing into perfect though semi-transparent figures.

The “spirits” seemed to Lord Rockalpine to advance towards his bedside; and in the stately beauty of those majestic forms, and the



Hauteville, and of Clarissa, his wife, is innocent! Use, then, thy blood-bought power to defeat his enemies, and to prove his innocence; restore to him the rights, titles, and estates, which are his, because they would have been mine. Confess thy crime—give thyself up to justice; death of the body is preferable to that of the soul. Seek out my Clarissa's father; remind him of his vow to see my Arthur righted as soon as our father was no more, and my son of age. Bid him publish *my marriage*, and clear my wife's honour, and *prove my son's legitimacy*: he has the proofs. *I come to thee*, to tell thee, that thy tortures, *thy torments*, thy days of anguish, and thy *sleepless nights*, are known to us in our blissful home *on high*; and we come (permitted to *do so*) to *tell thee* how thou mayest win *eternal pardon*. Choose, then, thy doom. *Confess, resign, restore*. Do justice to the son, *thou who didst* slay the father. Confess thy

crime, give thyself up to justice on earth, and ensure mercy and pardon on high. Resign thy blood-bought honours, Usurper—Murderer—Fratricide !”

“ No, no, no !” shrieked wildly and aloud the Earl of Rockalpine. “ Hence—avaunt ! Ye are false spirits—ye would beguile me to my ruin ! *My* brother had no wife—no son ; or, if Arthur Bertram be his son (and I own the vivid likeness has often struck me), he is—he must be illegitimate ! There is no Earl of Rockalpine save myself !”

“ Arthur Lorraine is the true Earl of Rockalpine,” said, in a sepulchral voice what seemed to the excited Fratricide to be his brother’s ghost. “ Confess, repent, resign, restore, or perish eternally !”

“ Never, never ! I will never confess aught, resign aught, restore aught !” wildly shrieked Lord Rockalpine, springing out of bed, and upsetting, as he did so, a marble statue of Wil-

fred, first Earl of Rockalpine. The Earl himself fell to the ground, stunned and senseless ; for in falling he had struck his temple against the pedestal.

The noise of the heavy fall of the marble statue was heard in the room beneath the Earl's. It was a sort of boudoir, in which the Countess of Rockalpine and Lady Ida were seated. The former was lecturing the latter on the favour and encouragement she showed to her dissolute brother, and on the miserable result of her own " seasons" in town.

" Oh, heavens ! what is that ?" cried Lady Ida, starting to her feet. " What a heavy fall, and in papa's room, too ! Oh ! what can it be ?"

She was very pale, and her hands, tightly clasped, were pressed on her bosom.

" Perhaps your father has had a fit of some kind," said Lady Rockalpine. " Ring the bell for Leblond and Mrs. Prosser" (his valet and

the old housekeeper). “I am a great deal too nervous and excitable to venture up-stairs, after hearing that heavy fall. Your father has been very poorly, and has looked and acted in a very strange way, ever since we have been here,” added her ladyship; “there’s no knowing what may have happened!”

“Oh, heavens! what do you mean, mamma?” cried Lady Ida, rushing out of the room, and darting up-stairs, followed by Mrs. Prosser and the Earl’s valet, Leblond, whom she met at the door.

The Earl’s door was locked, but Mrs. Prosser had a pass-key.

Leblond, who had at one time lived with a gambler who had committed suicide, tried to persuade the Lady Ida to retire. But Ida was a girl of some character, originality, and resolution. She was the first to enter the room, to rush to her father’s side, to bend over him, and try with her handkerchief to

staunch the blood that welled up and streamed from his temple.

Mrs. Prosser and Leblond lifted the Earl on to a sofa at the foot of his bed, restoratives were administered, and consciousness was restored.

The Earl then explained, that in getting out of bed to exclude the moonlight, which prevented his sleeping, he had stumbled, knocked down the marble statue of his ancestor, and fallen over it, striking his temple against the pedestal. He made no allusion whatever to his dream, or to the mysterious and ghostly visitants who were the cause of his leaving his bed.

He persuaded himself, or endeavoured to do so, that the vision of departed spirits, which had at first paralysed and then maddened him, formed in reality, part of a frightful nightmare and hideous dream, caused by the strong dose of opium with which he had tried to drown

the voice of *conscience*. Perhaps he was right —perhaps it *was* merely a dream. Be that as it may, he had no wish to dream such a dream again ; and he requested the Lady Ida to bring the *Times*, and read to him ; and he ordered Leblond to make up a bed on the sofa at the foot of his couch.

Alas, alas ! even while the Lady Ida read a glowing article on the results of the reformatories and prison discipline which he himself had originated, and which proclaimed him as the benefactor of his species, he still saw with his mind's eye that trio of departed spirits—he beheld that blot of gore on his brother's side—he heard those words—

**“ARTHUR LORRAINE IS EARL OF ROCKALFINE ! CONFESS, RESIGN, RESTORE, OR PERISH ETERNALLY !”**

## CHAPTER VI.

“ If widowhood should be my fate,” she said,  
“ No widow’s cap shall e’er deform my head.  
Think you my silken tresses I’ll conceal,  
And simulate a woe I cannot feel?  
No! in dear Paris the first year I’ll spend  
(Each darling Frenchman is the widow’s friend !)  
In Longchamps soon it shall be mine to rove,  
And dreary black I will exchange for *mauve*,  
Jet butterflies upon my breast I’ll wear,  
And fix them in my folds of flaxen hair.  
This is the deepest mourning I’ll assume  
For one who made my life a living tomb.”

LASCELLES.

MEANWHILE, Lady Rockalpine had quietly settled it in her own mind, that the Earl had either had a fit, or that *something worse had happened*. A thousand frivolous fancies crowded through the Countess’s shallow brain, before Mrs. Prosser, as *she* thought herself in

duty bound to do, presented herself before her ladyship to quiet the fears and allay the anxiety which the good old soul imagined *must* fill the wife's heart on this occasion. Yes, before the Countess knew that nothing serious or fatal had befallen the Earl, she had resolved never, *in any case*, to disfigure her still pretty face by wearing an English widow's cap. She had determined to escape all censure, on this head, from the noble matronage of England, by retiring to the Continent during the first year of her widowhood. She had almost made up her mind how soon *mauve*, violet, and silver grey might be substituted for *black*, which was very unbecoming to her complexion, and, therefore, odious to her. What visions of freedom, boundless wealth at her own disposal (for her own fortune was very large, and her jointure splendid)—what continental gaiety, beaux, flatteries, homage, and dissipation—what visions of white bonnets

and jet butterflies were put to flight when Mrs. Prosser, with many low curtsies, explained the real state of the case. However, Lady Rockalpine had tact enough to "assume a virtue if she had it not," and to simulate an anxiety and relief she was far from feeling.

On the next day, as the reader knows, the funeral of the late Earl took place. Lord Rockalpine was sufficiently recovered to attend, and to be present at the reading of his father's will; after which ceremony he quitted Rockalpine by the latest train which left A—— at 11·30. He felt his heart grow somewhat lighter as he drove through the park (drawn by a pair of fleet horses) on his way to the station. He had suffered such mental anguish during his stay at Rockalpine, that to him the thought of London, of the House of Peers (in which he would now have to take his place), of committees, debates,

meetings, clubs, parliamentary and ministerial dinners, and the constant presence of his private secretary, were a comfort and relief.

The recollection of the dream or vision of the ghostly trio faded as he thought of the excitement and absorbing interest of his public career; when suddenly, at an angle of the road, lying down under a gnome-like thorn, he beheld a man and woman of the lower orders. The woman's head was on the man's shoulder, and her hand was clasped in his.

The moon came from behind a cloud at this moment, and her rays fell full on those two figures, who, startled by the sound of the carriage wheels, both looked up at once; and the Earl drew back in his carriage, for, at a glance, he recognised ROUGH ROB and his wife MARY!

The sight of Rough Rob, associated, as he always was, in the Earl's mind with the chance of detection, drove all hope and tranquillity

from his breast ; and again the ague of fear was upon him, and again, looking, in spite of himself, from the carriage window, the ghostly trio of the night before seemed to move hand in hand over the wild moor, and to gaze at him with mournful menace in their eyes, while with hands raised as if to warn, they flitted away, and disappeared in the dark, distant depths of the Black Wood. Was it the vision of a morbid and excited fancy, or *do* departed spirits really revisit the earth ? We incline to believe——But, no ; let the reader decide for himself.

One day Lady Ida, who was moped to death at the Castle, and who was never so happy as when she was on horseback, not having her own favourite steed with her in the country, requested that Wildfire, a very spirited horse, which she had once ridden with her father, might be saddled, as she felt disposed for a good gallop. Lady Ida never looked so well

as she did on horseback. She was a fearless rider, and, attended only by a groom, she set off, determining not to return till dinner-time, and thus get rid of the dull monotonous succession of hours between an early luncheon and a late dinner.

Lady Ida, who, though she did not understand Edith's nature, and could not sympathise with her secret sorrow, felt some interest in so sweet and suffering a sister, looked in at Edith's sick-room before she set out for her ride.

Edith lay pale and wan on her bed; her eyes were closed, but she was not asleep. She looked up at the slight noise that Lady Ida made, in drawing back the bed-curtains, and said, gently holding out her thin, burning hand to her sister—

“How bright and blooming you look, Ida! I see you are equipped for riding; where are you going?”

“Over the hills and far away—anywhere

out of this Castle Dolorous. I am moped to death ; I can endure it no longer."

" But what horse are you going to ride ?" asked Edith. " You haven't got your own Atalanta here, have you ?"

" Oh, no ! but I have ordered Rogers to saddle Wildfire."

" Oh, don't ride that fiery-spirited, powerful horse !" said Edith. " Hauteville could not manage him—he's a hunter, too."

" Never mind ; I can manage him, and I should like to follow the hounds to-day—my blood stagnates here ! Good-bye. I wish you were able to come with me."

" Ah !" thought Edith, as the large tears filled her eyes, " the last time I rode was at Interlachen, on the day when Arthur risked his life to save me, when I fell into the Death Valley ! Poor, beloved Arthur, where art thou now ?"

Lady Ida did not show herself to her mother.

The Countess, herself very timid on horseback, would have raised a hundred objections to Ida's riding Wildfire—visions of broken limbs, hump-backs, concussion of the brain, death, would have passed through the Countess's brain. This Lady Ida knew full well. So she stole down stairs, flitting from pillar to pillar like a sunbeam ; her golden hair floating from beneath her black velvet hat, and her dark-green habit setting off to great advantage the slender proportions of her tall, graceful figure. Lady Ida placed her little elegant, well-shod foot in the groom's hand, and with one bound the practised horsewoman was on Wildfire's glossy back. How he arched his noble neck and tossed his beautiful thoroughbred head, and seemed proud (as he curveted and caracoled) of his lovely burden !

Lady Ida rode gaily away, followed by the groom, and she tried all Wildfire's paces—walk, trot, canter, gallop—and found them all

perfect ; and she patted his neck, and felt as if she could command the world ; when suddenly “the horn of the huntsman was heard on the hill !”

Wildfire snorted, pricked up his ears, and was off, fleet as the wind, in the direction whence the sound came.

Vainly Lady Ida tried to draw him in, to moderate his pace. Another blast of the horn reached his ears, and swift as lightning away he went, leaving the groom, white with terror, far, far behind. On, on, on, dashed Wildfire ! Lady Ida had no power to guide him ; all she could do was to keep on his back Nothing stopped him, and to her horror she saw him rushing wildly on to the cliffs that overhung the sea.

She gave herself up for lost, and with a wild cry implored her Father in Heaven to save her. She was within a few feet of the edge of

the cliff, and all her efforts to pull in Wildfire were vain.

Her strained arms had lost all strength, her whole frame trembled with terror and excitement, and large tears streamed down her white cheeks. A minute more, and she sees, she feels that Wildfire and herself must go over the rocks into the foaming sea—when suddenly a man, who had been lying on the edge of the cliff, started up, caught Wildfire by the bridle, stopped his mad career, and with great strength held him in, while Lady Ida slipped from her perilous eminence on to a ledge of grass-grown rock.

“How shall I thank you?” said the trembling Lady Ida, taking out her purse.

“Oh, I want no thanks, my lady,” said the man; “for though I sees now you ain’t the Lady Edith Lorraine, you’ve got a look of her.”

“I am her sister,” said Ida, forcing the contents of her purse on her deliverer.

“ Well, then,” said the man, “ you tell her that Rough Rob, the poor hunted cretur she was so afeard on the other day in the Black Wood, saved your life, and would her’n, or that of any of the family, for the sake of him who’s in Heaven, and whose blood Rough Rob’s so falsely accused of shedding, though he’d have died to save him any day. And tell her, too, not to fret; her true love shan’t swing for a crime he never done—he’s too like him that was murdered in the Black Wood five-and-twenty years ago. Tell her I’m on the track of them gipsy-lads that saw the murder done. I’m a poor half-crazed, hunted cretur myself—forced to herd with gipsies, and hide in caves and holes, and wear a knife at my side, never knowing who’ll attack me ; but I won’t go on so, I’ll stand my trial like a man. And now, my lady, if you aren’t afeard to mount, I’ll lead you back to the road, and there we’ll find the groom, and I’d advise you to have the saddles

changed, and let the man ride this spirited  
cretur ; he ain't fit for a lady to mount—he's  
a hunter, he is."

Lady Ida followed Rough Rob's advice, and  
got home on the groom's horse in safety. She  
told Edith of her strange *rencontre*, and Edith  
drew some comfort from Rough Rob's promise.

## CHAPTER VII.

“ She never told her love, but let  
Concealment, like a worm i’ the bud,  
Feed on her damask cheek. She pined in thought,  
And with a green and yellow melancholy  
She sate, like Patience on a monument,  
Smiling at grief.”

SHAKESPEARE.

YES, Arthur Bertram was committed to M——  
gaol, there to await his trial for the murder of  
the Marquis of Dunstanburgh.

And Edith Lorraine was still lying on her  
bed, in a very delicate state of health ; uncon-  
scious of the verdict of Wilful Murder recorded  
against her beloved ; unconscious of the sup-  
pression of the will, by which her grandfather  
had left all his real and personal property, all

the hoards of a life, to her ; unconscious that all that should have been hers was now to come into the possession of the profligate young Lord Hauteville, her brother, and Marion his wife ; and that *she*, who had so looked forward to enriching her Arthur, was, owing to the disappearance of the late Earl's will in her favour, left entirely dependent on her parents ; one of whom never concerned himself about her, while the other was much exasperated against her by her attendance at the inquest, and the devotion to Arthur Bertram which she had so publicly displayed.

The Countess of Rockalpine, who longed to quit the Castle with her favourite daughter, Lady Ida, professed to think very lightly of Edith's disorder, and had fixed the day for her own departure, having resolved to leave Edith in the care of Mrs. Croft and Mrs. Prosser, until she had recovered her strength.

The only peril that attended her stay at Mrs. Croft's was now removed.

Arthur Bertram was in prison, awaiting his trial for murder. There was no danger from that source ; but both Lord and Lady Rockalpine, though from very different motives, wished to keep up a good understanding with Mr. and Mrs. Croft; and Roger Croft had paid such obsequious court to the Countess, that she had decided he was a very agreeable, useful, and obliging young man. She had that passion for news, or rather gossip, which belongs to very small minds and very narrow hearts ; and Roger had most successfully pandered to this weakness.

The topic next in interest to that of the murder of the young Marquis, and the arrest and committal of Arthur Bertram, was the entire disappearance of old Mr. Croft.

It will be remembered that on the night preceding the day fixed for the inquest, and

two days before the funeral of the late Earl and the reading of his will, Roger Croft suddenly appeared in his father's apartment, and induced him to leave the Villa and proceed with him to B——, where a boat awaited him (on mysterious business connected with the Earl of Rockalpine). Since that time old Croft had not been heard of. His absence at the inquest on the young Marquis of Dunstanburgh, and still more, his not being present at the late Earl's funeral and at the reading of his will, would have excited great surprise and animadversion, but that Mr. Roger Croft explained to all inquirers, that his father's absence was inevitable, and that he was well aware that important affairs of the Earl's kept him away at such a time.

For some weeks Roger Croft, by a variety of excuses and explanations, satisfied the curiosity of his mother and sister Gloriana about his father's absence; but at length Mrs. Croft

became very uneasy at never receiving one line from her husband. Gloriana, who loved her father, more than shared her mother's anxiety; and Roger Croft, while reassuring them, was obliged to own that his father's absence was strangely protracted.

He even proposed (if it lasted much longer) to set out for the spot to which he averred that the Earl of Rockalpine had sent Mr. Croft, to ascertain that he was well, and that no evil had befallen him.

The Countess of Rockalpine and the Lady Ida Lorraine left the Castle, after the former had arranged with Mrs. Croft that Edith, in the course of a few days, should be removed to Croft Villa.

A little change for the better had taken place in Edith; and Phœbe, who was much attached to her young mistress, greatly preferred staying with the Lady Edith in the country, to following the Lady Ida to London.

No wonder she did not wish to leave the country. The secret of this preference lay not entirely in love of the Lady Edith or the country, though the former was become a strong motive with pretty Phœbe; but a more potent influence still was at work. Pretty Phœbe was in love with a handsome young farmer on the Rockalpine estate, and he was desperately in love with her. He had asked her to go with him to Alnwick Fair, which was to be held in a few days. Old Potts, his father, and Mrs. Potts, his mother, with Miss Potts and her sweetheart, were to be of the party, and Phœbe hoped that Joe would propose at the Fair.

Very soon Phœbe's tender and careful nursing wrought a happy change in the Lady Edith's state.

Phœbe, who, had her young mistress not been a good deal better, would not have had the conscience to ask for a holiday, nor the

heart to enjoy one, had taken great care to conquer in herself the natural love of gossip, and the delight in creating a sensation.

She had kept carefully concealed from Lady Edith the fact that Mr. Arthur Bertram had been committed to M—— gaol on a charge of murder, and poor Edith fondly hoped that the inquest was still adjourned.

She was afraid to make any inquiries about Arthur, for she felt that she could not speak about him without revealing the secret of her heart to Phœbe; but she resolved when Phœbe was gone to the Fair, and Mrs. Prosser was waiting on her at tea, to make a few inquiries of the good old lady, who would, perhaps, not suspect, as a younger woman might, the intense interest she took in her answers, and in everything that concerned Arthur Bertram.

At the end of the week—and it was then Thursday—Lady Edith was to be removed to Croft Villa; and then she hoped that Arthur,

set at liberty, would join the family ; and that Love and Hope would again smile on their re-united lives !

What a bright day was that, on which pretty Phœbe, rosy as the morn, and very neatly and becomingly dressed, sprang into the smart gig, which her dear Joe Potts drove up to the back entrance to the Castle ! How proud and pleased she felt ! Her eyes were as blue as the bunch of forget-me-nots stuck inside and outside her peaked straw bonnet. Her hair and eyebrows were black, and the former was glossy and rippled. She had a neat black silk paletot, and a dark blue silk dress, short enough to show a taper ankle and pretty little foot in a Balmoral boot.

Her Joe was a fine young farmer ; but he was a good deal spoilt, to our taste, by the way in which his hat was stuck on one side, and by a cigar in his mouth.

But Phœbe was in love ; and, for her, whatever Joe did was right.

Miss Potts was driven by her lover in his dog-cart, and a younger sister went with them.

The old Potts, though he could, as he said, lay his hand on five thousand pounds if he could on a shilling, went in his own tilt cart with his wife. He was a jolly, red-faced farmer of sixty, in top-boots and in a coloured choker, and she was a fat, motherly woman, in a coal-skuttle bonnet, a large cloth shawl, a well-preserved black silk dress, still fresh and glossy—though it had formed the chief glory of her scanty, frugal *trousseau* thirty years before, and boasted a short waist, *gigot* sleeves, great latitude of back, and very little longitude of skirt—and was adorned with a small tippet. She wore a pair of green thread gloves. She was armed with a bag and a huge umbrella, and she kept strict watch on those valuable articles,

and on her husband's pockets. She was a sensible woman. She thought Joe would be all the steadier if he had a wife to look after him, and she thought Phœbe Freke the very girl to suit him.

The Fair was well attended, and presented a very lively, animated spectacle. The booths were gay with bright ribbons, trinkets, toys, gilt gingerbread, spice-nuts, brandy-snaps, oranges, apples, nuts, almonds. There were shows in abundance and lively music. Here “THE PIG-FACED GENTLEMAN” was painted larger than life, with a pipe in his mouth; there the “FAT LADY” was represented with all the attributes of a prize sow. There the grand theatre formed the centre of attraction; the manager, dressed like a huntsman, trumpeted forth the praises of his *corps dramatique*, and announced the approaching performance of “a hentirely new sensation drammar, called *The Red Hindian, hor the Bloody Scalp of the*

*Murdered Bride of the Back Woods;*" while, to add to the reality, the Red Indian himself bowed and grinned from the platform outside the booth, and invited the public to "valk up."

Old Potts and his jolly dame were much annoyed by the application of a *scratcher* to the back of Mrs. Potts by a young scamp. She ultimately, however, caught the young scoundrel in the fact, and belaboured him with her umbrella until he roared and bellowed out for mercy, to the great delight of the crowd, who shouted out, "Well done ! Go it, old girl ! Give it him well ! Lay it on thick !" and so on, until, from sheer fatigue, the old dame let the culprit go, giving him as he went a final poke in the back with the ferule of her umbrella. With this solitary exception, everything went smoothly, gaily, merrily at the Fair.

Phœbe Freke returned to the Castle with her pockets full of gingerbread nuts and fair-

ings ; and, better still, with a pretty gold and turquoise ring on the engaged finger of her little dimpled hand. She had seen “the Pig-faced Gentleman,” “the Fat Lady,” *The Red Indian, or the Bloody Scalp of the Bride of the Back Woods* ; she had seen her Joe carry off sundry wooden lemons, apples, tin snuff-boxes, and china dogs at “throwing the bar,” win pockets-full of nuts at rifle-shooting, and knock all the pipes out of Aunt Sally’s mouth ; she had been with him in a swing and on a “merry-go-round,” and, on the whole, she had spent a delightful day at the fair with her now affianced Joe.

## CHAPTER VIII.

“ Stone walls do not a prison make,  
 Nor iron bars a cage ;  
 Minds innocent and pious take  
 These for a hermitage.”

ANON.

AND what were the feelings of Arthur Bertram, when he found himself the inmate of M—— gaol? Alas! even when the hisses and howls of the mob, who had followed him to prison, died away in the distance, shut out by the thick stone walls, did he cease to hear that maddening sound? No; their echo was still in his ears. It seemed as if, as long as life lasted, he could never cease to hear those yells —“ Down with the murderer!” “ Blood for blood!” “ Hanging’s too good for him!” Even

the gaoler, who knew the young Marquis of Dunstanburgh personally, and had received some kindnesses from him since his accession to the title, and had hopes of an appointment for his son through his lordship's influence—even *he* scowled with more than a gaoler's wonted ferocity at poor Arthur, and answered with more than professional gruffness a few questions the accused gasped out as to the probable duration of his imprisonment.

Arthur threw himself, in an agony of grief and despair, on the little iron settle with its wretched mattress; and, hiding his face in his hands, tears, of which the source was love for Edith, forced themselves through his now thin fingers, and sobs convulsed his once manly, noble breast.

The gaoler glanced at him over his shrugged shoulders with an expression of ineffable contempt.

“There’s a poor, snivelling, blubbering

chap!" he muttered between his teeth; "a mean sneak, that can get behind a man and knock him on the head and stab him in the back, all the same as a forriner, but can't stand by what he's done—a miserable creature as ain't true to hisself. He 'ont die geame, not he! for that he's guilty, and will be found guilty, and hanged, there can't be no doubt. Look at un a blubbering there! That 'ud convince any reasonable being what sort of a chap he is! Well, I does like to see 'em geame to the back-bone, and if they've done the thing that is wrong, standing to it, and true to themselves—true to the last, as a body may say."

With these words, he shot another glance of supreme contempt at Arthur Bertram, who still lay on the settle unconscious of the gaoler's presence, and of all save the ruin of his hopes, and the darkness that had closed round him like a pall.

"And to think that such a sneak as that"

(muttered the gaoler as he went his way along the stone passage, at the end of which was Arthur's cell), "to think that the likes of he, should have sent the Most Noble the Markis of Dunstanburgh clean out of this world, and that afore Jem's got his appintment and been purvided for ! If it ain't enough to make a man cuss and swear, I don't know what is. Such a fine figgur of a man as the Markis wor, and so pleasant-like and affable. Well, I ain't fond of seeing 'em hanged in a gen'ral way, but I'll see that chap strung up, that I will, and no mistake. Why, he hadn't even the sperit to offer to stand a glass, a snivelling sneak of a chap ! GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY ?— why, the judge and jury will see at a glance, as I do, that he's one of your stab-in-the-back fellows. Heigho ! I'll go and have a glass of something stiffish along of Bob the Burglar. He'll hang for it this time, and no mistake, for he knocked old Miser Miles on the head, that's sartain

sure ; but then he done it in self-defence, when Miser Miles was just going to shoot him like a dog, and he's as merry as a grig. He don't lie on *his* bed a-shaking and a-blubbering—he'll die geame, he will ; but that young chap's a regular muff, what's called a hassassin, that what he is. Drat him ! I've good cause to cuss him, and Jem not purvided for, which he was sure of an appintment but for that snivelling hassassin there !”

The gaoler did not judge Arthur more harshly than did the world in general. The feeling so universal in the neighbourhood of Dunstanburgh and Rockalpine spread itself over the whole kingdom. The papers were full of further particulars of the mysterious and horrible murder of the young Marquis. The leading journal had an eloquent article on murders in general, and, with many saving clauses about not prejudicing the public mind and not prejudging this individual case, contrived to

prejudice the whole world at home and abroad, and to prejudge and precondemn the unhappy Arthur Bertram.

And now, shall we venture to ask the reader what opinion he has formed upon this momentous question of “GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY?”

*We* know, and we trust that all who have read this “ower true tale” know and feel, that of deliberate, premeditated murder Arthur Bertram was quite incapable. But we know, too, that passion will occasionally master the best and the wisest among us ; we know that he loved Edith Lorraine with a love which fell very little short of that idolatry which is forbidden by Him who cannot err ; we know that the Marquis’s jealousy was such that it had already urged him to use exasperating words, and even personal violence, to Arthur Bertram —that a conflict had already taken place between them on the confines of the Black Wood.

We will suppose that Arthur went forth to

carry out to the full his Christian principles and pious abhorrence of duelling. He, the successful lover—he who, whatever his birth, his low estate, his wretched fortunes—he who had, in spite of all, won from the maiden they both adored, a preference and a favour for which the Most Noble the Marquis of Dunstanburgh, lord of so many noble estates, and of such fabulous wealth, had sued so long in vain ! Is it impossible that, meeting on those lone Flats, before Roger Croft joined them, Arthur Bertram, armed with a loaded stick, solely for self-defence, may have met with the young Marquis in an angry, an insulting, a maddening state of exasperated feeling, and may have been so provoked, so outraged, as to have struck him in self-defence, and unintentionally to have slain him ? The Marquis may have used language of the most irritating, insulting kind. He did so once before, and may have done so again. He may have struck

his rival on the face ; and Arthur Bertram is a man. We know how often a blow has proved fatal, which was never meant to injure seriously.

We only put these questions hypothetically, and in answer to the solemn, momentous question of, “ GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY ? ” Surely, if it were so, Arthur’s crime would be one which, could the facts of the case be proved to be what we have suggested as not quite impossible, the sternest judge and jury would consider “ JUSTIFIABLE HOMICIDE.”

But was it so ? The evidence of the surgeons who made the *post-mortem* examination proved that the blow or blows of which the young Marquis died must have been struck from behind. And how, in the case we have supposed, could Arthur have struck his rival from behind ?

Alas, alas ! how can the truth ever be brought to light ? Arthur swore at the in-

quest, and at the adjourned inquest, that when he reached Dunstanburgh Flats, he found the Marquis lying on his face between the fissure of the rocks, in a pool of blood, and quite dead; and that Roger Croft, coming up at that moment from the direction of the Abbey, at once accused him of the murder. That his (Roger's) shouts brought some coast-guardsmen and policemen to the spot; and that when Lady Edith Lorraine arrived at the Flats, he was in their custody. Everything, then, would tend to throw the started suspicion on Arthur Bertram.

The only witnesses that could throw any light on this ghastly mystery, were those gipsy-boys whom Edith met so suddenly among the cliffs, and who were actual witnesses of this deed of blood and guilt. It is just possible, if they could be produced, and examined separately, and were called upon in open court to identify among many the murderer of the Mar-

quis, that Arthur Bertram's innocence might be established, or his guilt proved. At present, a stronger chain of circumstantial evidence has seldom linked crime with detection.

The knobbed and loaded stick produced at the inquest, and on which clotted blood and flaxen hair made even men grow white and faint, was ARTHUR's!—he had bought it for self-protection on a walking tour. With that loaded stick the deed was done—that was proved beyond a doubt; for the wounds at the back of the young Marquis's head corresponded exactly with the loaded knob of the knotted stick.

All efforts to obtain any clue to the whereabouts of the gipsy-boys had failed *in toto*, so that the Coroner had decided to waste no more time in bringing the adjourned inquest to a close, and had conveyed to the minds of the Jury a suspicion very strong in his own mind, that the gipsy-lads existed only in the excited

and somewhat morbid fancy of the eccentric young lady who had so strangely appeared on the Flats just after the murder, and, more strangely still, had, as it were, dropped from the clouds during the inquest, and insisted on giving her evidence.

That the idea of these gipsy-boys was either the result of hallucination or cunning, became a general impression ; and as time wore on, and nothing was heard of them, those who had believed in them shook their heads, and said—

“ Poor young lady ! how she loves that vile murderer !”

## CHAPTER IX.

“The quality of mercy is not strained;  
It falleth like the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the plain beneath.”

SHAKESPEARE.

ROGER CROFT had completely quieted the fears of his mother and Gloriana, by professing to go away for some days in search of his father, and returning, repeated the story that he was quite well, but was prevented writing by a sprain which he had given to the thumb of his right hand, and which rendered writing painful to him. He added, that he was progressing favourably with the business Lord Rockalpine had confided to him, and that his return might be confidently expected ere long.

Edith was now again an inhabitant of Croft Villa, and Mrs. Croft began to hope that, as the Marquis had been murdered, and the wretched Arthur Bertram, whom she had always hated, would no doubt be hanged for that murder, her darling Roger would in the end win Edith, and that the lost will would be found and proved, and Edith thus become one of the wealthiest and best of matches.

“As for Arthur’s being hanged bringing any disgrace on us,” she said, “that’s all nonsense. Mr. Croft, who doted on his ill-conducted baggage of a daughter, made a great fool of himself in bringing up the base-born brat as a gentleman. But the fact is, in point of law, bastards have no relations ; and, therefore, Arthur (wicked ruffian) is no relation of ours. Of course it’s very horrible to think of anyone one has known from his infancy, and seen playing with one’s own angel children, coming to the scaffold. But these bastards

are almost always bad ; and I was a poor, timid, weak young thing at the time, or I should have set my face against his introduction into my family, and have said : ‘ Mr. Croft, you may trample *me* in the dust, you may cut *me* in halves, but you shall not force a bastard upon my true-born babes. *I* know what I owe to my children, if you have no sense of propriety and decency towards them.’ ”

Roger Croft did his utmost to ingratiate himself with Lady Edith Lorraine, but in vain. She more than disliked, she loathed him, and pleaded indisposition as an excuse for confining herself almost constantly to her own room.

This plea could not well be disputed, for every tinge of colour had forsaken her cheeks ; she was wasted almost to a shadow, and the late rounded, blooming, bright-eyed girl had now in her face and form the shadowy, touching beauty of a sorrowing angel.

Roger Croft had two heavy cares on his bad heart: one was the inexplicable disappearance of the late Earl of Rockalpine's will from an iron safe, of which he had a forged key, and in which he knew that his father kept it; and the other, worse still, was the total failure of all his attempts to interest in his favour the idol of his base soul, the Lady Edith Lorraine.

There was in the immediate neighbourhood of M—— gaol a house—we will not call it a convent—in which dwelt a number of ladies—Protestant ladies of rank and wealth—who had retired from the world, and had given themselves up to good works. They were Sisters of MERCY in every sense of the word; and Edith, having met one of them by the death-bed of a poor cottager, had formed a sort of intimacy with the sisterhood, some of whom, much to the annoyance of Roger Croft and his mother, visited Lady Edith occasionally at Croft Villa; and sometimes Edith, when the

Crofts were absent, took a little walk to some poor pensioner's cottage with one of these "Sisters." Gloriana alone knew of these walks, but she was a fast friend of Edith's.

Edith opened her heart to the sweet, sympathising, saintly Sisters ; and they, by their pity, their faith, and their pious counsels, saved her from despair.

\* \* \* \* \*

One evening, Arthur in his lone cell was engaged upon his defence, for the time of his trial approached. He had seen counsel of eminence, and consulted with them ; but he had resolved to plead his cause himself. He saw that Sergeant Quibble, and Mr. Either-side, Q.C., did not believe in his innocence ; and he felt that, though their verbal eloquence might excite the imagination, it could never convince the minds of a wise judge and a dispassionate jury.

"I will say what is true," he exclaimed ;

“I will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,” he cried. “And O Father in heaven! and O Saviour of sinful men! grant me the power to do my own wretched case justice, and I pray thee to put it into the hearts of judge and jury to discern the truth, and to act uprightly.”

Arthur was on his knees, uttering this prayer, when the gaoler, who had been won from his wrath and contempt by his prisoner’s calm and gentle fortitude, came in, and said, “Two of them English nuns was come to pray and preach.” This the gaoler said with a sort of sneer.

Arthur started to his feet, and at that moment the sun came out from behind a cloud, shining for the first time that day, and its rays fell in a full stream on two forms that stood in the doorway. One was a tall, pale, thin, middle-aged Sister of Mercy, in the dress of her order; the other was robed in black, and

wore a hood and a thick veil. Could she be a novice ?

The elder lady motioned to the gaoler to withdraw ; when he was gone, she held out her hand to Arthur, who had risen to welcome her, and led him up to her companion, who had sunk on a stone bench. She then gently raised her young companion's veil, and Arthur, falling on his knees with a wild cry of surprise and joy, recognised the pale wan face and wasted form of his heart's idol, his Edith ; while she, poor girl, overcome at the sight of the change wrought in her beloved by confinement and grief, fell forward into his arms in a deep and deathlike swoon.

## CHAPTER X.

“Would I were with thee every day and hour,  
Which now I spend so sadly, far from thee ;  
Would that my form possessed the magic power  
To follow where my sinking heart would be :  
Would I were with thee !”

THE HON. MRS. CAROLINE NORTON.

THE Sister of Mercy who had so kindly accompanied poor Edith to her Arthur’s prison, was one of those saintly women who, no matter whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, are true Christians, and seem sent from Heaven to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep themselves unspotted from the world.

Sister Sympathy (such was the name of

Edith's friend) was a lady of high birth and ample fortune. She was one of the "Marys" of earth, and she *had* chosen that good part which should not be taken from her. Such women seem, indeed, like angels without wings.

Wherever Sickness, Sorrow, Shame, and Penitence groaned and wept, there Sister Sympathy's pale, sweet face, her soft, white, helping hands, and graceful, black-robed form, were seen. There her soft, low voice was heard; there her influence (at once cheering and softening) was felt, and there her wealth diffused comfort and help. She stole from the poor cottages to the hospital wards or the wretched prison, like a sunbeam. Where *she* had been, the cupboard was no longer bare, the grate fireless, the children barefoot. The feverish patient, tossing on the hospital bed, grew calm and cool as Sister Sympathy poured into his wounds the oil of comfort and the wine

of help. She bathed the burning brow with fragrant waters, and smoothed the hot pillow, and the sufferer blessed her and slept. She stole to the captive's side, and whispered of hope and faith ; and, lo ! there was light in the dark cell, and comfort in the sinking heart.

And now, with Arthur's help, she has restored Edith to consciousness, and has seated her by her lover's side ; and she looked from the grated window, while Arthur held the maiden of his bosom in a long embrace, and while they exchanged a few whispered words of welcome and of love.

Sister Sympathy knew all—Edith had confided everything to her ; she knew, too, what love was, for she had loved in her bright and beautiful youth, now so long passed away ; Death had claimed her beloved one, almost at the altar. Not satisfied with robbing her of her little world of love and light, the “fell sergeant” had enlisted in his black band, her

father, mother, sister, brothers ; and for some time Amabel St. Ormond prayed that she, too, might be taken. But it was not to be ; there was work for her to do, and she must do it, before going to her rest.

Heavenly Love then filled the heart of the passionate child of earth, and the beautiful young daughter of rank, wealth, and fashion became a Sister of Mercy—Sister Sympathy, friend of the friendless, and head of a holy band of pious ladies devoted to good works.

Lady Edith Lorraine had first met Sister Sympathy in the cottage homes of her own and her late grandfather's poor pensioners. The unhappy soon respond to the voice of pity, and ere long Sister Sympathy had won Edith's confidence, and had become the gentle girl's best friend, guide, adviser, oracle !

Sister Sympathy had a strong mind, a stout heart, great powers of reasoning, a fund of natural logic, and an unerring instinct in her

estimation of character. The organs of perception and reflection gave fulness to the pale, noble brow of Sister Sympathy. From all that Edith told her, Sister Sympathy felt almost convinced of Arthur's innocence ; but, before she quite made up her mind, she wished to see him, and to hear his own account of the dreadful and fatal occurrence on Dunstanburgh Flats. If it proved, as Sister Sympathy felt pretty nearly sure it would, that her impression, after seeing and conversing with Arthur, was all in his favour, then she had a plan in her wise head and warm heart for proving his innocence ; and she had resolved to spare no trouble, no expense to help the friendless young man, if she felt certain of the holy truth and justice of his cause.

Lady Edith, after a few moments of passionate tenderness, tore herself from Arthur's fond embrace, and, going up to Sister Sympathy, begged her to question and cross-question

Arthur Bertram as to all the particulars of the dreadful event which had brought him to his present woful plight and doleful prison. Sister Sympathy complied; she drew a chair close to the little pallet on which Arthur and Edith sat hand-in-hand, and Arthur, at her request, entered into the minutest details of all those occurrences with which the reader is familiar. As he proceeded, the convincing eloquence of truth found its way to Sister Sympathy's heart and mind; her soft eyes brightened and sparkled through their tears, her pale cheeks became first a soft pink, and then a bright scarlet; her little white hand united itself to that which Arthur held tightly clasped in his own, namely, that of Edith; and when he had done, she said,

“Cheer up, my Edith—dear child, cheer up! My children, do not despond. And you, Arthur Bertram, tell your story in court as you have told it to me, and I do not be-

lieve that any twelve Englishmen can be empanelled as a jury who will find you guilty, or any judge on the English bench condemn you."

"Oh ! bless you, thank you, for those dear words !" said Arthur ; while Edith, sobbing convulsively, sank into Sister Sympathy's arms.

"And, now, dear children," said the Sister of Mercy, "I will tell you what I will do. I have a relative learned in the law, and once a barrister in high repute and good practice. He ceased to practice his profession because he could not bear to make the worse appear the better cause ; but, as the champion of friendless innocence, he still occasionally enters the lists ; and I am much mistaken and disappointed in him if he does not take up your cause, Arthur Bertram, as if you were his own son. I would judge no one hastily, rashly, but I own I have formed my own sus-

picious ; God forgive me if I wrong any one ! At any rate, I feel pretty sure that my cousin, Charles St. Ormond, will think with me, that much will depend on the evidence of those gipsy boys; and I can promise you, my dear young friends, that no expense shall be spared to get those boys into court. I will write to my cousin at once. I have little doubt that he will be here to-morrow, although he is three hundred miles away. Into his hands you may safely put yourself and your cause ; and I feel convinced that all that man can do for you, he will do, and that God will help him to justify innocence and to detect guilt. And in the meantime, my dear young friend," said Sister Sympathy, "let me exhort you to patience and faith. Pray at morning, at evening, and at noonday, and in the long sleepless hours of the silent night. Pray fervently—pray ever. Read your Bible, and daily learn a hymn from this little book,"

she said, giving Arthur *The Christian Year*. “ And now we must leave you, for it is growing late, and the time allowed the prisoners for converse with their friends will soon expire. We leave you, but we leave you with the fountain of comfort” (here she touched the BIBLE); “ and the Father will send the Comforter in answer to your prayers.”

Again the gentle Sister looked out of the barred and dingy window, on the wretched court, and again Arthur pressed his Edith to his breast, and imprinted a long kiss on her pale lips.

They are gone, and Arthur is alone ; but no longer downcast, desolate, distressed. He turned to his Bible for comfort, and he found it. He committed to memory that exquisite evening hymn in *The Christian Year*, and then he prayed long, fervently—prayed on his bended knees, by the side of his little pallet, and prayed as he lay stretched on that hard

and narrow bed ; and as he did so, sleep came softly down on the long wakeful lids. A choir of heavenly harps seemed to lull his weary spirit, and in a column of silver moonlight (that came slanting in through the barred window of his prison) white-winged angels seemed to float, and Faith, with her oaken cross, and Hope, with her silver anchor, to glide down, and take their station at the head of Arthur Bertram's little pallet. And few on couches of down, and under canopies of crimson velvet, have ever passed a night of such bliss, such beatitude, as did poor Arthur Bertram on his wretched straw mattress, in his prison-cell in M—— gaol, after the maiden of his bosom and the sweet Sister of Mercy had visited him there. True Love, sublime Constancy, strong Faith, bright Hope, sweet Consolation, lovely Religion—these were the spirits that visited Arthur in the fair land of dreams.

Sleep on, young Arthur !—sleep on, sweet

Edith's first and only love ! and, with God's help, may thy innocence be proved (if innocent thou art). And for *her* dear sake we pray, that the time may come when thy waking realities may be as full of joy and peace as thy prison dreams.

## CHAPTER XI.

“ Absence makes the heart grow fonder.”

HAYNES BAYLEY.

TIME passed on, and still Mr. Croft came not. Roger Croft had constantly assured his mother that his father was perfectly safe, and fully occupied with the Earl’s business; but that the injury to his right thumb, which he had begged him, Roger, to explain, prevented his writing. He added that a certain amount of mystery surrounded the affairs that at present engrossed him, and that, as the result of the private negotiations he was conducting for the Earl of Rockalpine would be very lucrative and beneficial, he hoped Mrs. Croft would keep

quiet, and not expect him till she saw him.

While Roger Croft was at home, his arguments succeeded in silencing Mrs. Croft's tongue and quieting her fears ; but when Roger took his leave (which he did to endeavour to get possession of the splendid legacy left him by the Marquis of Dunstanburgh, and of which his mother knew nothing), then she began again to fret and get frightened at the protracted and mysterious absence of her husband.

Mr. Croft had all his life been a very dull and prosy, but a very regular and punctual correspondent. The excuse of the injury to his thumb seemed to her very much like an invention ; and she well knew, alas ! that Roger Croft never told the truth when a lie would answer his purpose better. Added to this, Mrs. Croft's funds were very low. Mr. Croft had always kept the cheque-book and

the purse, but then he had never failed to empower her every Saturday, as regular as the day came round, to pay all the weekly bills. Now, for three weeks they had not been paid. Butcher, baker, grocer, fishmonger, poulterer, laundress, and gardener, all began to grow anxious about their money—to write notes about large amounts to make up, or small sums to meet, and, in short, to dun the distracted Mrs. Croft. But what was worse still, was, that several pressing letters had arrived at the Villa, directed to Mr. Croft, and which Mrs. Croft had opened, announcing that a policy for five thousand pounds would lapse unless the premium was at once paid up. This insurance it had been the great object of Mrs. Croft's life (even as a bride) to induce her husband to effect, for her especial benefit. And now, for the want of a few pounds, it is very likely to lapse ! Mrs. Croft was furious at the thought. She wrote to Roger, but she

obtained no answer. She wrote again and again, with a similar result. Mrs Croft could endure her anxiety no longer. She resolved to go to town. She would take Gloriana for company, and take up her abode for a day or two at the house of Mr. Lambert, in Queen's Square, Bloomsbury. Mr. Lambert was an old friend of Mrs. Croft's family. He had often allowed her to make his house her home during her visits to London, and he had given her a general invitation to put up at 111 Queen's Square, not even insisting on any previous notice of her coming. Mrs. Croft resolved, then, that she would set off the next day for town, and repair at once to Mr. Lambert's very comfortable, old-fashioned residence in Queen's Square. Her object was to make every possible inquiry about her husband, especially of an old clerk, who had once been in Mr. Croft's office, and who now was employed by the very Insurance Company—

THE VAMPIRE—in which Mr. Croft's life was insured for five thousand pounds. She hoped, too, to see her beloved Roger, and the only scruple she had was about leaving Edith Lorraine alone at the Villa during her visit to town. But then, the only danger that could assail her was averted ; the only intruder that the Earl and Countess could object to was shut out, as the hard woman hoped and believed, for ever by the walls of M—— gaol.

Edith, absorbed as she was by her grief, and interested in no company but that of Sister Sympathy, would not miss either herself or Gloriana. Edith was not allowed to write to the Countess or Lady Ida, so exasperated was the former at Lady Edith's behaviour at the coroner's inquest ; therefore, it was not very likely her ladyship would hear of the visit to town. At any rate, Mrs. Croft felt she must go ; and, as she had only a few shillings in the world, she must borrow of kind,

gentle, generous Edith whatever pocket-money the dear girl had by her, and apologise for a step which, anxiety about Mr. Croft's life (or rather the insurance on it) compelled her to take.

Gloriana, who really loved her father, and who was excessively anxious about him, gladly agreed to attend her mother to London.

Edith, comforted by the prospect of unin-vaded solitude and unquestioned visits to Sister Sympathy, made no objection, and gladly handed to Mrs. Croft the contents of her purse, which, however, owing to her large bounty to the poor, were much smaller than Mrs. Croft had hoped and expected.

“ How very unlucky it is,” said Mrs. Croft to Gloriana, “ that Edith is so very poor just now ; she has only lent me just enough to pay our fares and a cab or two. However, when once we get to dear old Lambert's, we shall be free from all expense ; and he always places

his brougham at my disposal, too, so when once we get there we shall be quite at home."

"But, mamma, if he should be out of town?" suggested Gloriana.

"Oh, he is never out of town, my dear; but even if he were, the old housekeeper knows me, and has known me since I was a little trot, so high. She will make us as comfortable as if old Lambert were at home. And now, have you made Betsy pack up all we shall want?"

"Yes, mamma, as you desired, in one large black trunk."

"I hope you have put up my new pink moire and my black velvet, and your own best silk and new ball-dress."

"I have, mamma; but I see no chance of our wanting them."

"Oh, you cannot tell; no one knows what may happen; it is well to be provided. Put up my jewels and your own trinkets, and tie

a scarlet bow on to each handle of the trunk. We shall then recognise it at once, and not have to stand among a mob of wretches vainly trying to identify our own luggage."

They are off at last.

Edith watched them from her own window till the pony-chaise was a black speck in the distance. And then, as it was a very fine day in early spring, she resolved to go and call on Mrs. Prosser, the housekeeper at the Castle, and who had been laid up with rheumatism since Edith's departure.

Edith's way lay partly across a corner of the purple moor, over the brook, which she passed by stepping on the large pieces of rock or stone placed there on purpose, and then through the Black Wood, and into the Rockalpine shrubberies. As Croft Villa was on the Rockalpine property, and it all formed one estate, belonging to the Earl her father, Edith did not hesitate to take this walk unattended. She liked

to be alone, to think of her dear Arthur.

The neat, trim, well-kept gardens of Croft Villa, with their smooth, bright, broad, gravel carriage-road and trim evergreens, were rich in snowdrops and golden and lilac crocusses, the dew was on the grass and on the leaves, sparkling in the sun like gems. She went down the broad stone steps—those steps which five-and-twenty years before had been blotted with the blood of Lord Hauteville, her father's elder brother, Rockalpine's heir—and passed out at the green gates of the Villa into the wild country, so beautifully contrasted with the well-kept garden and well-pipeclayed steps of Croft Villa.

Edith's heart was a little lighter than it had been for some weeks, for she had that morning received a note from Sister Sympathy saying that her cousin, Mr. St. Ormond, was as fully convinced as herself of Arthur Bertram's innocence, and had great hopes that the momen-

tous question of “ GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY ? ” would be decided in his favour. At the same time, Sister Sympathy warned Edith not to be too sanguine ; but while hoping—and, above all, praying—for the best, to try to prepare for the worst, since all depended on the success of the efforts she and her cousin were making, and the large reward they had offered for the production of the two gipsy-boys who had witnessed the murder of the Marquis on the Flats.

“ Father in heaven ! ” said Edith (as she quitted the open moor and entered the Black Wood), “ in thy great mercy bring these gipsy-boys to light, for my Arthur’s sake ! ”

This ejaculation, or rather prayer, burst from the depths of Edith’s heart, and ere long it was answered ; for as Edith passed by that grassy amphitheatre, closed in by evergreens, the scene of Lord Hauteville’s murder, an impulse, which she could not understand or resist, compelled her to lift the sweeping

boughs of a dark pine and to enter that fatal spot ! There was the rough, unshorn man whom she had seen peering through those branches on the day of the Marquis's murder ; there was the tall, lean, but still handsome Irishwoman, his wife ; there was that gipsy Madge, who had, some four years since, prophesied that Arthur would live in a castle and wear a coronet ; and—oh, joy ! oh, ecstasy ! oh, comfort, hope, delight !—by her side, all seated on the grass, were the two bright-eyed, black-haired, brown-skinned boys who had witnessed the Marquis's murder, and who had begged her not to go to the Flats, lest she, too, should be killed !

Yes, those very gipsy-boys who had seen the young Marquis lying murdered on the stones, and who had warned Edith not to approach the blood-stained spot, there they were ! They, on whose evidence, in all probability, the life, name, fame of her heart's idol depended.

“ Oh, boys ! dear, good boys !” cried Edith, rushing up to the young vagrants and drawing them to her, “ where have you been ? whence do you come ? Don’t you know there’s a great reward offered for you ?”

“ We were talking of it a minute syne,” said Gipsy Madge, “ and Rough Rob here’ll get it, for he’s found ‘em ; and they’re my lads, and I mean to take them the night, as quiet and private as may be, to the Sisters o’ Mercy ; and, oh ! my dear young leddy, the tale they’ll tell at the trial will turn the scale, I’m thinking, and the poor youth now in gaol will be proved as innocent as your bonny sel’. And do ye remember what I told you four years ago, about a castle in his path and a coronet on his brow, and you in jewels and ermine by his side in the House of Lords, my leddy ?”

“ Oh !” said Edith, weeping for joy, “ I do indeed ; but can these boys prove his innocence ?”

“ I think they can, my leddy,” said Madge.

“ I knows as how they can,” said the rough, hairy man (whom the reader has recognised as Rough Rob).

“ Oh, good Saint Robert, help the innicent!” said his tall wife, “ and I’ll burn a candle to you !”

“ We will spake the truth, leddy,” said the elder boy. “ We saw the young Markis lying on the Flats in his blood, and we’ll point out the man as did it; we both knows him by sight. Oh, it was an ugly sight, my leddy, and I often drames I sees the dead body—all white, and blue, and green, in a pool of blood. I’ll spake the truth, my leddy.”

And Edith hugged him, in her deep gratitude and delight.

“ We must keep all dark, dark as night,” said Madge; “ they’ve been kidnapped once, and will again, if we don’t hide ‘em up, my leddy.”

“Oh, take every possible care, dear good people!” said Edith.

“Never fear us, my leddy,” said Rough Rob; “it’s I have got ‘em back, and this is the safest place to hide in, for them as has bad consciences flies this place. Trust to us, my leddy, and go now in peace; you may be missed and seeked.”

“God bless and guide you all,” said Edith, shaking hands with each in turn, as, with streaming eyes, she left the spot.

## CHAPTER XII.

“ And disappointment in the rear,  
That blasts the promised joy.”

GRAY.

IT was nine o'clock at night when Mrs Croft and Gloriana arrived at the Great Northern railway-station.

With the aid of a railway-porter and the scarlet bows, the black trunk was soon secured, and they themselves were soon safely ensconced in a cab, with their bags, bonnet-boxes, baskets, and all other small portable belongings, and driving through London on their way to Queen's-square.

“ It will be much too late for dinner,” said

Mrs. Croft, "but we can have a dish of cutlets, or a nice rump-steak, with our tea. I think I shall fix on a steak—Mr. Lambert's cook does rump-steak just to my taste—light brown outside, and red in, but only red with the gravy. Then, too, the cook at Mr. Lambert's makes the best buttered toast in the world, and we can have a nice spring salad, or a few fried potatoes. Besides, he keeps poultry, so, if we fancy it, we can make sure of a new-laid egg. I like mine very lightly boiled—three minutes; don't let me forget to mention *that*. You like yours with the white set—four minutes for *you*, remember. But if Mrs. Plumm or Mr. Lambert propose it, we should be none the worse for a broiled chicken, with mushroom sauce; we can have that, I dare say."

"Oh, that will be very nice!" said Gloriana; "but I long especially for a cup of tea. I am very tired and thirsty."

“ Well, I promise you, you shan’t have to wait long, Glory,” said Mrs Croft. “ My dear old friend’s servants well know they cannot please their master more than by making *me* very comfortable. Mrs. Plumm, the house-keeper, has known me from a girl—child, indeed—and she is well aware that, if I had chosen, I might have been mistress of that house and of her fine, portly self. The Square certainly is not as fashionable as I could wish; but the house is a perfect temple of comfort—such beds! and such a delightful warm bath at a few minutes’ notice! Then I shall have the brougham and pair at my disposal (I always have), and that saves a fortune in cabs. If I can but find out where your father is, and get money from him to pay up the interest on the policy, if it is not already too late—which God forbid!—I shall be easy in my mind; and then, if we are very comfortable,

and old Lambert pressing, perhaps I may make out a week in town."

"But Edith?" suggested Gloriana.

"Oh, Edith will do very well. I am not at all uneasy about her; but I shouldn't like to meet with Lady Rockalpine. She might think I ought not to have left that wrong-headed mope of a girl alone. But unless I were to seek the Countess out (which I promise you, my dear, I shan't do), I am not very likely to meet her. And now let me give you a hint, Glory: old Lambert is very fond of young girls, but he likes them to be full of fun, and always merry. You have taken lately to be almost as dull and moping as Edith herself. A word to the wise:—if you want old Lambert—who is as rich as a Jew—to remember you in his will, you must talk and laugh and joke, and be, as Roger would say, 'up to every-thing.'"

"But how can I, mamma?" said Gloriana.

“I am uneasy about papa, I am distressed about Edith, I am miserable about Arthur.”

“Hang Arthur!” said Mrs. Croft; adding, the next moment, “No, I don’t mean that, in a literal sense, Glory; but I do wish the trial well over, and his sentence commuted to penal servitude for life.”

“Oh, mamma, I am certain he is innocent!”

“And I am certain he is guilty! I remember the trouble I had with his mother—a pert, sly, independent young baggage, who disgraced her family and herself, and died in a madhouse. Ah, by-the-bye, if that were known, he might get off on the score of insanity, and be confined as a criminal lunatic for life, or rather, during Her Majesty’s pleasure, and I hope that would be for life.”

Gloriana was about to express her entire faith in Arthur’s sanity as well as in his innocence; but at this moment the cab stopped

with a sudden jerk, and the cabman himself, putting down the window from the outside, said—

“What number did you say, ma’am?”

“One hundred and eleven, as plain as I could speak,” said Mrs. Croft, pettishly; “a corner house—a large corner house!”

“Well, this ‘ere is a large corner ‘ouse, and three ones, as plain as plain, and that makes a ‘underd and heleven, I calcoolates.”

“Very well, then knock at the door, will you?”

“You please to put hout your ‘ead, and see for yourself, ma’am, what’s up.”

Mrs. Croft looked out.

“Good Heavens!” she exclaimed, “was there ever anything so unfortunate, so exasperating, so maddening? Why, the house is under repair! The old fool must be gone out of town, just to torment and provoke me!”

She sank back in the cab and began to cry.

Gloriana, in her turn, looked out of the cab-window and saw that Mr. Lambert's house was surrounded by a scaffolding ; that the windows were all splashed with whitewash ; that planks, and posts, and ladders were lashed together with ropes ; that bricks were piled up as if some enlargement were about to be commenced ; and, in fact, that it was quite absurd to suppose that any master was living in that house, or that any guests could be received there.

There was no light to be seen ; but Mrs. Croft felt sure that such very careful people as Mr. Lambert and his housekeeper would not have left the house quite unoccupied ; and ordered the cabman to knock, and, in fact, to persevere until he made some one hear.

After several thundering knocks, a light appeared at one of the garret-windows, and

an old head, in a high-cauled night-cap, with a flannel petticoat pinned over it, was protruded, and a shrill voice asked—

“Vat do you ever vant a-knocking the blessed 'ouse down? Don't you see we're under repairs?”

“Ask her,” said Mrs. Croft, “where Mr. Lambert is, and where Mrs. Plumm is?”

The cabman put the question as desired.

“Vy, gone abroad for the 'oneymoon, to be sure; and they won't be back till this ere 'ouse is new painted and papered, and two more rooms built on to it; and there ain't no one in the 'ouse but myself, and I bad with the rheumatis in my poor dear 'ead.”

“Good Heavens!” screamed Mrs. Croft; “do you mean to say that Mr. Lambert has married Mrs. Plumm?”

“Yes, marm,” cried the charwoman; “they were married a fortnight ago, at St. Pancras Church; and they 'ont be back for six weeks,

if then. Lawk-a-daisy, how the night wind do punish my poor, dear 'ead ! Your servant, ma'am ; will you please to leave your names?"

" Oh, no ; it's of no consequence," said Mrs. Croft, biting her handkerchief in her rage and despair.

The old charwoman had closed the window, and put out the light ; and the question was, " What's to be done now ?"

" My sisters !" suggested Gloriana.

" Oh ! the vile, undutiful, ungrateful creatures !" said Mrs. Croft, "*they* are quite out of the question."

" They would only be too delighted to receive us, dear mamma."

" You're a fool," retorted Mrs. Croft, " and know nothing at all about it ; besides I could not sleep in a house with a glass-case of grinning white teeth, in pink gums, and 'MR. TIPPIT, DENTIST,' on a brass-plate on the door. Still less could I rest with the thought of a horrid

foot, and a hand armed with a sharp instrument, just about to make an incision, to announce a chiropodist!"

The truth was, Mr. Tippit had written a very kind, manly letter—ay, and a letter any Christian gentleman might have been proud of—to tell Mrs. Croft that his Barbara was about to become a mother, and that her nervous, excitable, and delicate state of health was greatly increased by the grief and regret she felt at having offended her parents; that she was always saying, she was sure she should never be a happy mother unless she were given as a daughter; and he implored Mrs. Croft to forgive the past, and to come and cheer up his darling wife by her presence, in the fast-approaching hour of pain and peril.

To this letter Mrs. Croft had returned a very heartless and unworthy reply; and the next thing was an announcement in the *Times*, and this she kept from Gloriana:—

*“On the 3rd inst., in Bedford-row, the lady of Timothy Tippit, Esq., of a son, still-born.”*

Mrs. Croft had not much heart, but even she felt a pang when she read that announcement, and wished she had not written so harshly, nor acted so implacably. But it certainly would not do to drive up to Mr. Tippit's house, and ask for their hospitality, after what had passed so recently.

Then, as for Mrs. Cutts, she had written to invite her mother to come and visit her, expatiating on her spacious, well-furnished house, her four servants, her brougham, her adoring husband, her happiness, alloyed only by there being no prospect, in her case, of such good fortune as Barbara's (that was when a little stranger was expected); and actually presuming to say that there had been faults on both sides, but that she was willing to forgive and forget, and so was her beloved Castor Cutts, if her mother would accept the olive

branch they jointly extended, and come and stay with them as long as she liked, bringing Gloriana.

Mrs. Croft's rage at the receipt of this letter was very great, and she returned it in a blank envelope to her daughter, Mrs. Cutts. Of all this Gloriana heard nothing.

Bitterly Mrs. Croft repented of her implacability. It would have been so pleasant, so convenient, to have repaired at once either to Bedford-row or Maddox-street, and there have been received like a queen, and welcomed like a mother. But regrets were useless ; they could not stay in the cab all night. Already they had run up a considerable sum ; they must go to a hotel—there was no help for it ! Not knowing of any Family Hotel, Mrs. Croft consulted the cabman, who recommended the London-bridge Hotel, principally because it was a good way off, and so would suit his book in that respect ; and partly because the

stand he “used” was one close to London-bridge, and it was in that neighbourhood he put up.

Bitter were the bewailings of Mrs. Croft, at this distressing and expensive *contretemps*, and violent and angry was her conflict with Cabby, when he deposited her at the entrance of the London-bridge Hotel. However, for once Cabby had not charged more than his fare, and she was obliged to submit. Instead of all the little luxuries she had contemplated, she was obliged to confine herself to tea and bread-and-butter, for her funds were very low; and she retired to bed in a very ill-humour, and so cross and reproachful to poor Gloriana, who was in no way to blame, that the latter was very glad to retire into a small inner room, and forget all her troubles in a very small bed. The rooms assigned to Mrs. and Miss Croft, owing to the lateness of their arrival, were at the top of the house, and Mrs. Croft’s bed was

not large enough to accommodate Gloriana too.

Gloriana was soon in the happy land of dreams ; but her mother lay long fretting and tormenting herself—now in agonies about the probable lapsing of the policy—now in tears at the loss of the legacy, almost certain to ensue upon old Lambert's marriage—now full of terror at the thought of being penniless in London ! Before she closed her eyes, she resolved to be up betimes in the morning, in order to send to the old clerk, and to have an interview with him about the policy, before Gloriana was stirring.

Having decided on this, she at last composed herself to sleep, as a loud and regular snore might have convinced any one who was at all anxious on that point.

## CHAPTER XIII.

“Heaven first sent letters for some wretch's aid.”

POPE.

AT a very early hour Mrs. Croft arose, and, taking a writing-case from her carpet-bag, sat down to address a note to Mr. Krimp, the old clerk at the Vampire Life Insurance Office.

As soon as she heard the waiters and the chambermaids stirring, Mrs. Croft rang her bell, and succeeded in getting her note sent at once to the Vampire Office, not very far from London-bridge. She then dressed herself, and awaited the return of her messenger—sitting in an easy-chair the while, though with a very

uneasy mind, and knitting, for Mrs. Croft was an incessant knitter.

Gloriana still slept soundly.

In about an hour Mr. Krimp arrived. He was a very lean, bald old fellow, all in black. His clothes were very glazed and threadbare, but carefully brushed. Mrs. Croft, not having a sitting-room, was going to receive the old clerk in her bed-room, which, as we have said, was in one of the attics of the hotel, and consequently was very meanly furnished—for a hard, small bed, with scanty and rather soiled dimity curtains, three or four rush-seated chairs, a small round washing-stand, with a set of cheap ware of the well-known “willow pattern,” and a small dressing-table, formed the principal objects in Mrs. Croft’s bed-room. Mrs. Croft, however, perceiving, when she went out on the landing, on hearing a man’s step, a sitting-room neatly furnished, of which the door was ajar, invited her visitor into the

apartment in question, hoping that her doing so would not be noticed or mentioned by the chambermaid who “showed up” Mr. Krimp.

Mr. Krimp was, like so many of his class, a Job’s comforter.

“Your servant, ma’am,” he said. “I’m sorry to see you looking so bad. Fear you enjoy bad health, ma’am, to judge by your looks.”

“Oh, I’m very well, thank you, Mr. Krimp,” said Mrs. Croft. “A little tired, and rather anxious, that’s all ; and I’ve not had a very good night.”

“Ah ! sorry to hear it, ma’am ; a bad night tells sadly upon us when we’re beginning to be uppish in years ; it does on Mrs. Krimp, and I think, ma’am, you’ve the advantage of her, and she’s no chicken, as I often remind her,” he added with a chuckle ; “for she’s on the shady side of sixty, and if I remember

right, when we were obliged to have your register——”

“ I wish to talk of something much more important, if you please, Mr. Krimp,” said Mrs. Croft ; “ I mean the policy. How long is it since you saw Mr. Croft ?”

“ Senior, ma’am, of course. Oh, I haven’t seen him or heard of him for two months, ma’am ; but I have seen the young Squire, for I’m sorry to say he and Lord Hauteville were had up and fined heavily for kicking up a row in the street and fighting the police, and they were bound over to keep the peace ; and he wanted sureties, and sent to me, but I declined ; for I think, if once a young man gets into bad company, no penalty or bail will keep him out of mischief.”

“ Oh, I was in hopes,” said Mrs. Croft ; “ that Mr. Croft had called upon you or written to you, sending the money due, in order to settle that affair of the policy. I

hope there is no danger of its lapsing?"

"None at all, ma'am, for it has lapsed by this time, unless anything has happened to Mr. Croft—which I begin to think might be the case from my not hearing from him, and he generally punctual to a day, and a bonus coming in."

"Good Heavens, Mr. Krimp!" shrieked Mrs. Croft, "you don't mean to say that the policy we have paid up so regularly for thirty years, is in any danger of lapsing?"

"I mean to say, ma'am, it has lapsed—that it lapsed on the third instant, unless you can prove that Mr. Croft, senior, had departed this life prior to that date; in which case, ma'am, on your satisfactorily proving date and place of death, and age corresponding—for the Vampire is very exact—we shall have to hand you over five thousand pounds."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Croft, bursting into tears, "I have no reason to believe that Mr. Croft

is dead. My son, I am certain, knows where he is."

"Then Mr. Croft, junior, should have reminded Mr. Croft, senior, about this policy, ma'am. Five thousand pounds is no mere flea-bite—it's a good bit of money, ma'am, particularly where there's a family. I heard, ma'am, that two of the young ladies are well married—comfortably settled in life. I know their lords and masters, Mr. Tippit and Mr. Cutts—the former attends our teeth, and the latter cuts our corns. I'm sure I congratulate you, ma'am, for they're two very respectable young men; and my cousin, who visits them, says they make first-rate husbands. Of course you've heard, ma'am, of the disappointment in the son and heir of Mr. Tippit being still-born, and she, poor dear lady, for some days not expected to live?"

Mrs. Croft turned a little pale. "All danger is over now, I believe," she said.

“ Well, I should say not, ma’am,” said Mr. Krimp. “ My Anna says Mrs. Tippit fretted herself to a shaddow before her time came, and now she’s so weak, she has to be fed like a babe, and, I believe, might go off at any moment quite sudden. Mrs. Cutts is with her day and night.”

“ Pray, Mr. Krimp,” said Mrs. Croft, “ how do you advise me to act about proving——”

“ The dear old gentleman’s decease ?”

“ Oh, no ! I don’t mean that.”

“ Why, ma’am, there ain’t any other proof that can do you any good about the policy. If Mr. Croft is in the land of the living, *the policy’s lapsed*; if he’s departed this life, you’ve only to prove it, and the Vampire won’t cheat you of a farthing, or keep you waiting an hour.”

“ Perhaps I had better advertise,” said Mrs. Croft.

“ I’ve done that already, ma’am,” said Mr.

Krimp, taking out a newspaper, and handing it to Mrs. Croft ; " but no good came of it."

" Well," said Mrs. Croft, eagerly scanning the paper, " I must try to see my son, and consult with him."

" Ah, ma'am ! I fear you'll not get much help or comfort out of him. Shall I put in another advertisement, ma'am ? They come expensive ; but the Vampire would like to come to some certainty—the Vampire don't like suspense, ma'am."

" No, nor do I," sobbed Mrs. Croft. " I can decide on nothing till I have seen my son."

" Well, ma'am, perhaps when you have, you'll drop me a line. If the old gentleman's alive and kicking (excuse a joke), the policy's lapsed ; if he's departed this life, the five thousand pounds' yours, on proof of date and place of death, likewise age."

" Oh ! I have no hope," said Mrs. Croft ;

but checking herself, she said, "I mean, I have no fear. In fact, I'm so agitated, I scarcely know what I mean."

"Well, ma'am," said Mr. Krimp, "either ways, I beg to offer my condolences; for if you've not lost a good partner, you've certainly lost five thousand pounds, and *vice versa*. So I wish you good day, ma'am."

He bowed himself out of the room, and Mrs. Croft threw herself on the sofa in an agony of grief. While she was sobbing there, a waiter looked in, napkin in hand.

"Beg pardon, ma'am; I didn't know you'd engaged a private sitting-room."

"Nor have I," cried Mrs. Croft.

"Well, ma'am, the rule is, you must pay for every room you occupies."

"But I've only occupied it for half an hour," said Mrs. Croft.

"We don't make half hours here, ma'am," said the waiter, skipping down-stairs to have a

good laugh about the angry old lady with the pretty chambermaid who was coming up-stairs with Gloriana's hot water.

Mrs. Croft hurried back to her own room, to indulge in what she called "a regular good cry," behind the whitey-brown dimity curtains of her tent-bed.

While she sat rocking herself to and fro, as she thought with agony of the possible lapse of the policy, on that of the legacy, the charge for the sitting-room, and all the unpleasant remarks of the old clerk, she was roused by a scream from Gloriana, and starting up, she saw at the foot of her bed, where the black trunk had been placed, Gloriana, who had entered her mother's room unperceived, kneeling before the box, which she had opened, and gazing into it with looks of horror. Her pale cheeks and clasped hands, her parted lips and wild scream, made Mrs. Croft rush to her daughter's side. It was then Mrs. Croft's

turn to scream and turn pale—the box into which she gazed was not her own ! The device of the scarlet bows had suggested itself to, and had been adopted by, an old gentleman, whose wardrobe (a good deal the worse for wear) met her horrified gaze, in the shape of very old trousers, very old coats, waistcoats, boots, &c., &c., &c., with a very musty, fusty smell, instead of her own fragrant, neatly-folded, elegant dresses, her delicate, lavandered linen, her fancy cuffs, habit-shirts, chemisettes, and pocket-handkerchiefs.

“ My new Solferino silk, with high and low bodice !” gasped Gloriana.

“ My pink *moire*, and my black Genoa velvet !” shrieked Mrs. Croft.

“ My Paris blue velvet mantle !” sobbed Gloriana.

“ My Indian cashmere !” sobbed Mrs. Croft.

“ My new tulle ball-dress !” moaned Gloriana.

“ My jewel-case, and my gold watch and chain !” cried Mrs. Croft.

“ What *is* to be done ?” sobbed Gloriana.

“ We must get a cup of tea, for I am ready to faint,” said Mrs. Croft ; “ and then drive off to the Great Northern Station.”

## CHAPTER XIV.

“One woe doth tread upon another’s heels.”  
SHAKESPEARE.

“WILL you breakfast in a private room, ma’am, or in the ladies’ coffee-room,” asked the pretty housemaid, when, in answer to Mrs. Croft’s bell, she knocked at the door. “The ladies’ coffee-room is very cheerful and pleasant,” said the chambermaid, “and most of our ladies prefer it.”

“Let us breakfast there, mamma,” said Gloriana, “this room is so close.”

“None but ladies, and gentlemen as comes with ladies, family gents as we call ’em, ma’am, is admitted to the ladies’ coffee-room—which it

isn't many hotels as has one. I've lived in many, and never see one till I come here."

"Well, we will breakfast in the ladies' coffee-room," said Mrs. Croft, after she had confided to the young chambermaid the disaster of the exchanged trunk.

Effie, the pretty chambermaid, took an intense interest in this misfortune when she heard of all the finery lost, and had been permitted to glance at what she called the "male rubbish." Comforted by her sympathy and by her prophecies that the box would be returned to the station, because the old gentleman would be as much put out by the loss of his "male rubbish" as the ladies by that of their beautiful silks and velvets, Mrs. Croft repaired to the ladies' coffee-room with Gloriana.

The chambermaid was right in saying that few London hotels possessed the advantage of a ladies' coffee-room ; and this was a delightful room.

In spite of their many troubles, Mrs. Croft and her daughter did ample justice to the excellent breakfast spread before them in that large, airy, well-lighted saloon. While at breakfast, Gloriana remarked, in one of the further corners of the large room, a party at breakfast, consisting of three ladies and three gentlemen. One of the latter had his back turned to Mrs. and Miss Croft, but a glance which Gloriana had of his long face and lantern jaws, coupled with his quaint look and strange appearance, convinced her that she gazed on Old Hackney-Coach.

A very venerable-looking, handsome old clergyman, with silver locks, and evidently in extreme old age, yet hale, rosy, and cheerful, was of the party; and Gloriana suspected that this old divine, attired in the fashion of fifty years ago, was the Rev. Peter Pryme, father-in-law of Hackney-Coach. There were two very odd-looking women of the party, in coal-

skuttle bonnets, gigôt sleeves, small tippets, short waists, short skirts, and sandaled shoes ; these ladies and one more gentleman formed the party, which seemed very happy and merry. There was something bridal in their appearance ; and Gloriana guessed that the old curate had been tempted to share in the wedding festivities of Grace Pryme and her clerical bridegroom. Gloriana wished to claim acquaintance with Old Hackney-Coach ; but Mrs. Croft, perceiving her inclination, and not having any generosity of impulse or independence of feeling, sharply rebuked her for thinking of attaching such a set of “Guys” to her party, and added—

“If they are here to-night, and nothing better has turned up, we will ask Old Hackney-Coach to lend us a few pounds. Of course they must have plenty of money, or they would not be here at a first-rate hotel. But,” she added, “if I can but see Roger, I am certain

of money from him ; and, in that case, I shall not renew my acquaintance with those figures of fun, and as they have all read themselves almost blind, and cannot see an inch beyond their noses, they won't make us out if we don't introduce ourselves to them. And now, my love," added Mrs. Croft, "if you have quite done, we will slip away unperceived, and get into a cab, and drive at once to the Great Northern Station."

Mrs. Croft's *ruse* did not succeed. A waiter detected that she was going, and as she was a stranger there, he swiftly brought up the bill, and, to her horror, she saw "a private sitting-room" charged for. Mrs. Croft remonstrated, but in vain—except that a shilling was taken off the charge. Mrs. Croft's purse was so slender, she was afraid to leave herself penniless, and she proposed to the waiter to pay on her return to dinner. He remarked that being quite a stranger, it would be more

satisfactory if she would settle so far, and indeed that it was a peremptory rule with his master never to trust strangers.

“Do you know who those people in that corner are?” asked Mrs. Croft.

“Oh, yes, ma’am; they are old customers. Mr. Harkup Hackney and his bride, and her father the Rev. Mr. Pryme, and Mrs. Hackney’s sister and her bridegroom. They are come here for their honeymoon, ma’am.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Croft, “take my card to the gentleman with the iron-grey hair and long back, and say I wish to speak to him here.”

The waiter obeyed.

Kind Hackney-Coach was very glad to meet with his old friends; and Mrs. Croft found that, by giving him as a reference, she was able to avoid immediate payment.

The ladies of the party were introduced, and it was agreed they should all dine together. Hackney-Coach was very full of the cruel

murder of the young Marquis of Dunstanburgh, his patron and friend; but he would not admit a possibility of Arthur Bertram's having had any hand in that dreadful crime.

"I see by this morning's paper," he said, "that, for the convenience of the parties concerned, this memorable trial will take place in the Central Criminal Court, and that it is fixed for this day week."

"I shall stay in town," said kind old Hackney, "to see if I can be of any use, help, or comfort to the dear boy, of whose innocence I am as certain as of my own."

"Ah, still waters run deep," said Mrs. Croft. "I fear the only chance for his life is to set up a plea of insanity. His mother died in a madhouse."

"Oh," said Hackney, "I hope he'll scorn such a plea. He's no more mad than I am, and no more guilty than you are."

“So say I,” said Gloriana; “but mamma believes him guilty.”

“Well, his fate will be decided now in a few days,” said Mrs. Croft. “I should like to be present, and I must try if I can manage it; but come, my dear Gloriana, we are losing precious time with regard to our trunk—I will tell you all about *that* when we meet at dinner,” said Mrs. Croft, bowing all round.  
“Come, Glory.”

Alas, poor Glory! at the thought of Arthur’s being tried for his life on a charge of wilful murder, her tears fell fast. Mrs. Croft’s scolding made no impression on her; for she kept on saying to herself—“In one week! Arthur Bertram to be tried for his life this day week! Oh, dear, dear Arthur! may God strengthen thee, and enable thy judge and jury to see the truth, and to acquit thee, poor dear Arthur! Only a week! Alas! alas!”

## CHAPTER XV.

“How sharper than the serpent's tooth it is  
To have a thankless child.”

SHAKESPEARE.

IT was a bitter disappointment to Mrs. Croft and Gloriana to find, on their arrival at the Great Northern Station, that nothing had been heard of their travelling-trunk. By the advice of the clerk of the Lost Luggage Office, Mrs. Croft left the trunk she had carried away in mistake; and, after bewildering the official with multitudinous and very involved descriptions and directions, she took her leave in a very ill-humour, re-entered the cab, and said—

“If you had had your wits about you, Gloriana, this horrible misfortune would not have happened. My mind is distracted by anxieties of all kinds, but *you* have not a real care or trouble in life. You ought at once to have seen that that old wretch’s box was not our beautiful trunk. Why, the scarlet bows were of a different size and shade, and—oh !” she added, suddenly, with a sort of scream, that made Gloriana start, “oh, what a fool I have been, to leave that box at the office ! I feel convinced we shall never get our own back, and I should have done much better to have kept *that* than none.”

“But what could you have done with it, mamma ?” asked Gloriana.

“Well, I only looked into it. There were only old clothes and boots at top, but there might have been some things of value underneath ; and if not, at any rate I could have had in a Jew, and have got something for all

those old coats, trousers, and boots. And now what's to be done? I must try to see Roger; I know he's in town, for old Krimp, whom I saw this morning before you were up, told me he's living a great deal too fast, and getting into every kind of scrape, always going about with that disreputable Hauteville, who, though he's a nobleman, is certainly no gentleman. However, Roger's as proud as a peacock, and he'd be in a fine rage if we were to drive up to Mivart's or Long's Hotel in this wretched old cab. I never saw so miserable a concern! The horse is broken-kneed, and almost a skeleton, and has a raw on his back; the cabman has but one eye—and that is the case with the horse, too; then the cab is mended, splashed, and very small and low. A cab is always a very disgraceful conveyance, but this is the meanest and dirtiest old vehicle I ever beheld. Of course Roger would cut us dead if he saw us, in our dusty, old travelling-

dresses, driving up in this odious cab to one of his hotels."

"What can we do, then, mamma?" said Gloriana.

"Ah! that is all you can say; there is no help or advice to be got out of you, Gloriana. But, thank Heaven! I have a head on my shoulders, and, I flatter myself, a pretty good one. Old Lambert used to say, I should have been Prime Minister, or Lord Chamberlain—no, Lord Chancellor; I can't remember which—if I had but been a boy."

"And what have you decided on doing, mamma?"

"Why, on stopping in this cab just round the corner in Clifford Street, close to Long's Hotel, and getting the cabman to give in a note I have written to Roger. I have begged him to come and dine with us at the Bridge Hotel; and I have asked him to bring a few pounds with him, saying that we are penniless

in London, have lost our luggage, and are quite in despair and terror at our dreadful position. He cannot be so cruel and undutiful as not to attend to such a harrowing note as I have written to him."

"Does the cabman know where he is to go, mamma?" asked Gloriana.

"Yes; while you were staring about you like a stuck pig, I explained all to him. But here we are in Clifford Street, I declare! Cabby, Cabby!" said Mrs. Croft, putting her head out of the cab-window; "come here a minute, please, Cabby."

Mrs. Croft had an object in being so civil to Cabby.

"Will your horse stand still here, while you step round to the door of Long's Hotel in Bond Street, and give in this note, and wait for an answer?"

"Well, he ain't a good un at vaiting," said the cabman. "He've zeed better days, he

has. He wor an 'unter onst, and carried a peer o' the realm. I 'ont warrant un to vait long. He's a spirited hanimal; but if you likes to chance it and stand all repairs, I don't mind."

He took the note from Mrs. Croft's hand, and disappeared.

"What did he mean by 'chancing it, and standing all repairs?'" said Mrs. Croft. "That poor old skeleton horse, with rags round his broken knees, is not very likely to run away with us, I think."

Just at this moment a very dashing equipage, with four spirited greys, and a very showy harness, whisked past Mrs. Croft in her little dingy cab.

"It is Roger!" she cried; and, in her ecstasy, forgetting his dislike to all that was dusty and shabby, she put her head, in her old travelling-bonnet, out of the cab window, and cried, "Roger! Roger!"

Roger heard, and Roger saw ; but none are so deaf as those who *will not* hear, none so blind as those who will not see. The undutiful wretch let his mother call on him in vain !

It was a very high carriage—the same to which he had given his name. It was painted a bright green ; the liveries of the outriders and the servant behind were green. Roger Croft, in a very low-crowned hat of green beaver, and in the celebrated green “ Croft ” coat, was driving a beautiful woman, all velvet, lace, feathers, and gold. This was Marion, Lady Hauteville. Between Lord and Lady Hauteville and Roger Croft a great intimacy had sprung up. They were staying at the same hotel (Mivart’s); and while Hauteville drank and smoked with his own base and profligate associates, Roger Croft drove about with Lady Hauteville.

“ How stylish—how beautiful he looks ! ” said the silly mother. “ But I know, by a

certain twinkle in his eye and a curl of his lip, that he saw us. Well, I can't blame him, cutting such a dash as that, for not noticing us in this wretched old cab."

Just at this moment a street-band struck up ; a horn-player gave a loud blast, preparatory to playing the "Huntsman's Chorus." At that sound all the past rushed on the broken-kneed, broken-spirited, broken-hearted old cab-horse. He forgot the old cab at his heels, he forgot the brute his driver, he forgot his heavy whip, he forgot the raw on his shoulder, the rags on his broken knees, the burden of life, and the knacker's yard staring him in the face ! He is off, off ! as if again he was bearing the daring sportsman, the noble Lord Ascot, to be in at the death. How often he had done so !

Loudly screamed, roared, and bellowed the horrified Mrs. Croft, crimson with rage and terror ; while silent, pale, and in trembling

fear, Gloriana drew herself back into the corner of the cab. Another blast! and yet another! and the old hunter has overtaken Roger Croft in his dashing equipage, and driven up against the bright green panel and its showy arms.

It was now Lady Hauteville's turn to scream and turn pale. Roger Croft, mad with rage, rose up, and dealt the old hunter's head a heavy blow; maddened with the pain, the old horse reared, kicked, plunged, and dashed the old cab again and again on the side of the new "Croft." With his last dash the old cab-horse came down upon his knees, and the old cab went to pieces. Mrs. Croft was thrown into the middle of the street, and Gloriana sank fainting among the ruins of the cab. A large crowd had assembled. Mrs. Croft was picked up senseless, and carried into the nearest shop. Roger Croft, without stopping to inquire whether his mother was hurt, drove away, amid the yells, hisses, and groans of the crowd.

How much louder would those yells, groans, and hisses have been, had they known that the woman he had not the decency to inquire after, was his own mother, and the young girl fainting in the broken-down cab, his sister !

The brutal cabman by this time had reached the scene of the accident, and savagely and brutally was he lashing and kicking the poor old hunter, who was again on his legs.

Among the crowd assembled round the broken cab, was a gentleman, who no sooner perceived the face and form of the young lady who had fainted inside, than, opening the door, he lifted her out, and carried her into the same shop in which Mrs. Croft, not really hurt, was in a violent paroxysm of kicking and screaming hysterics.

The shop, luckily, was a chemist's ; and the usual restoratives having been administered, Gloriana opened her pretty black eyes, to meet those of her quondam adorer, Mr. Blower.

Gloriana had often rather regretted Mr. Blower, and Mr. Blower had never, as he said in confidence to Mrs. Cutts, been able to root out the image of Gloriana from among the ruins of a broken heart. Their eyes met, and so did their hands ; and Mrs. Croft came out of her hysterics “ to watch the game,” as she called it. But her attention was soon called off by a gruff voice at the door. It was that of Cabby, come to demand the full cost of the repairs to be done to his cab.

“ You said you’d chance it, ven you axed me to leave my ’oss. I told you he wor a sperited hanimal, and ’ad been a ’unter ; and you said you’d chance it, and stand all repairs.”

“ Neither your wretched old horse nor your more wretched old cab was safe or fit for use, and I’ll not pay a farthing,” said Mrs. Croft.

“ Oh ! you ’ont, ’ont you, you reg’lar wicious old cure ? We’ll soon see that.

Whatever does you go to presume for to ride in cabs ? Homnibushes is the vehicles for you, only them's too good, and so's a veelbarrer ; but I'll get my rights, you may depend. Oh ! if it warn't for the lor, wouldn't I lurrup you a good un—wouldn't I wallop you as I never walloped a 'oss in my life ! You a lady !”

“ Hold your insolent tongue, cabman,” said Mr. Blower, going boldly up to the enraged brute, “ or I'll give you in charge for insulting and abusive language.”

The cabman, cowed by the voice and manner of Mr. Blower, backed into the street, and began brutally lashing and kicking his wretched horse.

The crowd cried “shame !” but did not interfere. Gloriana, who had learnt from Arthur and Edith to feel intensely for that ill-used being the London cab-horse, and who had read Captain Curling's admirable work on the subject, seeing a policeman coming to-

wards the scene, ran up to him, and at once gave the cabman in charge.

As a magistrate was sitting at that very time in —— Court close by, the policeman took the brute off at once, telling Gloriana she must accompany them to prefer her charge. Mr. Blower, offering to attend her, called a cab, and handed in Mrs. Croft and his heart's idol, who was loudly cheered by the crowd for her spirited conduct in defence of the poor cab-horse. On their way to the police-office, Mr. Blower informed Mrs. Croft that he had inherited the fortune of his aunt, the wealthy Miss Tight, who had left him all she possessed, on condition of his giving up business in the artificial leg, arm, eye, and ear line, and adding to his own name that of Tight; so that he was now Mr. Tight-Blower, or Mr. Blower-Tight, whichever the ladies preferred. The magistrate, a very humane man, fined the cabman forty shillings under Mr. Martin's

Act; and as he was unable to pay it, he was sent to prison, with hard labour, for a fortnight; the poor old horse being taken, by the magistrate's order, back to his stable, and the cab, in its dilapidated state, to its proprietor.

Mrs. Croft, enraptured with Mr. Tight-Blower in his altered circumstances, and enchanted to see that he was more than ever enamoured of Gloriana (in spite of her old black straw turban-hat, grey cloak, and linsey-wolsey dress), was in high good humour.

Mr. Tight-Blower proposed that they should keep together that day, and that he should get his brougham, which he had left at a livery-stable, and drive them to his house. Mrs. Croft agreed, on condition that he took her first to the London-bridge Hotel, to put off till the morrow their dinner with the bridal party. She then gladly accepted Tight-Blower's invitation to go down with him to Wimbledon,

where he was living in his late aunt's villa, to dinner.

“We'll buy a nice bit o' fish,” he said, “and a goose, to add to my bachelor's fare, and be as happy as the day is long. As for Mr. Croft, I no more believe he's dead than I am; and I think the Vampire can be made to pay. I'll tender the money to-morrow—five thousand pounds is no flea-bite; we'll see about it. So now cheer up, and let's be merry while we may—for we every day grow older.”

An excellent dinner, with plenty of champagne, restored Mrs. Croft's spirits, and brought on “an exposition of sleep.”

Yes; there she lay, in the pretty villa drawing-room, after dinner, on the late Miss Tight's comfortable crimson Utrecht velvet sofa; and while she enjoyed her nap, Mr. Tight-Blower or Mr. Blower-Tight (which the reader likes) stood in the window recess with Gloriana, looking at the moon, and while relating all he

had suffered, stole his arm round her trim waist, and whispered in her ear, “ Doesn’t she see how her poor Tight-Blower loves the ground she treads on? and will she doom him to despair—or will she be his dear, darling little wife ? ”

Gloriana’s head sank on Tight-Blower’s shoulder, as she whispered, “ I will ; ” and when the footman came in with the tea, Mr. Tight-Blower handed to the table, to preside there, his affianced bride—the future Mrs. Tight-Blower.

## CHAPTER XVI.

“Yes, I forgive my child’s clandestine marriage;  
For, after all, she’s married to her carriage.”

LASCELLES.

MR. TIGHT-BLOWER lent his mother-in-law a sum sufficient to pay her bill at the London-bridge Hotel, and to meet all her expenses in town. The dinner with Hackney-Coach and his party came off, and was a very merry one, Hackney-Coach insisting on playing host on the occasion.

Mr. Tight-Blower “tackled” the Vampire, as he called it, and there seemed some hope of the policy being saved; and so “all went gaily as a marriage bell.”

Mrs. Croft found, indeed, great help and comfort in her son-in-law elect, but even he failed to obtain any tidings of old Croft. Neither could Mrs. Croft obtain the slightest notice from her undutiful and insolent son Roger. The intimacy of his mother and sister with Mr. Tight-Blower made him more resolute than ever in shunning, and, in fact, cutting them. But if Tight-Blower was an element of estrangement and discord between Mrs. Croft and her vile, ungrateful son, he was one of reconciliation in the case of the offending daughters, Mrs. Tippit and Mrs. Cutts.

Tight-Blower had a very good heart, and he could not bear to see Mrs. Tippit so unhappy and deserted. He therefore made it a personal request that Mrs. Croft would call on her suffering daughter. Tight-Blower had a brougham, and in this brougham he drove Mrs. Croft and Gloriana to Bedford-row, to visit Mrs. Tippit.

Great was Mrs. Croft's delight when she found that, instead of the glass-case full of grinning rows of white teeth with pink gums, nothing announced the dentist but a small brass-plate with the name of "MR. TIPPIT." This change had been wrought by the influence of Mrs. Tippit. Tippit certainly lost many inferior patients by the removal of the glass case and the rows of white teeth and pink gums, but he rose in the profession in consequence of the withdrawal of this showy practical advertisement. His patients were of a higher, wealthier class, and on the whole he was no loser.

Mrs. Tippit, scarcely recovered from her confinement, was looking very delicate and pretty. Her tender and devoted husband had surrounded her with every possible comfort and elegance of life; and when Mrs. Croft saw her daughter lying on a rich modern sofa—in a wadded rose silk wrapper—in a boudoir fur-

nished with the most elegant luxury, her own French maid to wait on her, and a page—a perfect constellation of buttons—to answer her bell, Mrs. Croft forgave her from the bottom of her heart, and deigned to accept her daughter's pressing invitation to make her house her home during her stay in London ; Gloriana, of course, being included in this invitation.

As for Mrs. Cutts, she was gone with Mr. Cutts, her husband, to Paris for a holiday, and therefore Mrs. Croft was spared the misery of making-up with a daughter whose husband still proclaimed his calling by the picture over his door of the hand, the foot, and the sharp instrument. Mrs. Croft was so very comfortable at the Tippits', and was made so much of by her son-in-law the dentist, and by Tight-Blower, Gloriana's intended, that she troubled herself very little about Lady Edith Lorraine. Still less did Lady Edith Lorraine trouble herself about her faithless chaperon. All her thoughts,

hopes, and feelings were centred in Arthur's acquittal. Long and frequent were her consultations with Sister Sympathy, that lady's cousin, Mr. St. Ormond, and Detective Meadows, who had long been lurking in secret places at Rockalpine, to unravel the dark web of crime which had puzzled even that renowned Detective.

The discovery of the gipsy boys was a secret as yet known only to Arthur, Edith, Sister Sympathy, Mr. St. Ormond, Rough Rob, his Mary, Gipsy Madge, and Meadows the Detective, who had greatly helped Rough Rob to discover the distant spot to which they had been most artfully kidnapped. In company with Sister Sympathy, Edith had frequently cheered Arthur's captivity ; and as far as she was concerned, all she dreaded was Mrs. Croft's return—all she hoped (about her) that she might prolong her stay until the day of Arthur's trial. Oh, what blessed comfort, in this his

hour of grief and misery, did Arthur find in the true love of one faithful woman's heart ! What comfort does man always find in such affection, as long as he has virtue to deserve and sense to appreciate it ! And Edith seems to him to be appointed the blessed instrument Providence has selected for saving his life, and what are dearer to him far, his name and fame.

It was through Edith he first knew Sister Sympathy, and through Sister Sympathy Mr. St. Ormond had been induced to interest himself in the case of one so forlorn, and to bring all the experience of a practised barrister, and all the zeal of a generous nature, to the justification of innocence and the detection of guilt.

## CHAPTER XVII.

A son abridge the old age of his father!

LOUIS XI.

MR. AND MRS. CUTTS were, as we have said, in Paris, and, among other objects of interest, they visited the madhouses with which the City of Delights abounds. The lively Frenchman reproaches the English as a nation driven by fog and gloom to despair and suicide ; but social statistics have proved that suicide is of more frequent occurrence in France than in England. And in the suburbs of the gayest city in the world, “moping Madness, laughing wild amid severest woe,” is most frequently found

Among the wards and cells visited by Mr. and Mrs. Cutts, was one in which one of the keepers told them that an old Englishman had been for some time located. His madness, the keeper said, was of a perfectly harmless kind, and had he not been placed there by his son, who had exhibited the necessary certificates, and who paid for his board and lodging, they should scarcely have considered him sufficiently insane for confinement in that asylum. The keeper added that the old man was always reading an English Bible which a former patient, also English, had left behind him when he went to his last long home ; and what seemed most to distress him was there being no one whom he could understand, or who could understand him.

The account the keeper gave of the old man interested Mr. and Mrs. Cutts, and they requested to be allowed to see their countryman.

Little did Mrs. Cutts, when she tripped lightly along the stone passages in her French kid boots, gathering up her flounced silk, and thinking of her rich velvet paletot and its ermine trimming—little did she think who would meet her view when the door was opened ! There, on a wooden tressle, his Bible on his knees, and the light streaming in through the grated window on his bald head —there was old Croft, her father, who had been decoyed, trepanned, and tricked into that living tomb by the heartless villain whose plot required the old lawyer's absence—his son Roger !

It was sad to see the change wrought by misery, confinement, and the sense of his son's base treachery and ingratitude, in the face and form of old Croft. But yet, changed as he was, his daughter knew him at a glance.

“ Let me go to him alone, Castor,” she said to her husband, after she had revealed to him

who the old Englishman was. "He is not mad, and it would pain him too much to be seen in this degraded state by you or any other stranger."

Mr. Cutts complied with his wife's considerate wishes, and Almeria entered the cell alone.

As she drew near, the change in the once spruce and proud old man seemed more touching, and her sense of her own filial ingratitude and desertion more harrowing.

Old Croft was reading the Book of Job. So intent was he on troubles greater than his own, that he did not hear Almeria enter, nor was he aware of her presence until she sank on her knees before him, and the well-known, well-remembered word, "Father!" burst from her very heart.

Yes; the daughter knelt, her rich silks trailing on the dusty floor—she knelt in her velvet and ermine, her laces and jewels, before

the wasted, broken-hearted, old man! . And, at the sound of that familiar voice, he looked up, and extended his arms. Almeria crawled on her knees to his feet, and laying her face on his old, tottering knees, wept long and bitterly.

Her father, whose intellect was quite unimpaired, soon explained the mystery of his confinement in a French madhouse. Roger, the arch-villain, had decoyed him from his home by a diabolical artifice, had tricked him into a visit to this madhouse, and left him there as a lunatic.

“ Ah, I fancy I know his object,” said old Croft. “ He wanted to prevent my presence at the reading of the late Earl of Rockalpine’s will, and he dreaded my revealing certain important family secrets connected with Arthur. He shall be defeated yet. The will which he hoped to get out of my iron safe is here, stitched in the breast of my coat, and so are

the papers on which Arthur's welfare depends. Take me away from this prison—take me to England, my child, that I may do justice to all."

Mrs. Cutts, who spoke French well, and was no stranger in Paris, soon obtained of the authorities the release of old Mr. Croft; but when they got him to the Hôtel du Louvre, he was taken dangerously ill, and for some time his life was despaired of. And while he was lying between life and death, Arthur Bertram, his grandson, was undergoing his trial for the wilful murder of the Marquis of Dunstanburgh, in the Central Criminal Court, London. In his case, as in that of Palmer the Poisoner, and many others, it was found more convenient to the judges, witnesses, &c. &c., to remove the scene of trial to London. The excitement that attended it was intense and unparalleled. The rank of the victim, the romance woven in with the crime, the Love

and Murder so closely united—the mystery in which the whole case had been so long involved—all contributed to invest this murder and trial with an interest no crime of the kind had excited for many a long year. The papers were full of the “Dunstanburgh murder;” a broadsheet, by a street author, sold by hundreds of thousands daily; portraits, said to be of Arthur Bertram, but which had done duty for Thurtell, Greenacre, Rush, Tawell, and many others, were hawked about the streets; so were lives, histories, &c., &c. Every detail connected with the prisoner’s most trifling remark or action was made public; and where facts fell short, fibs supplied their place. The mysterious Dunstanburgh murder occupied every mind, and was the theme of every tongue.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Thrice is he armed who has his quarrel just ;  
And he but naked, though in triple steel,  
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE sun rose with unclouded splendour on the morning fixed for Arthur Bertram's trial. The sky was of the deep, clear, bright sapphire so common in Italy, so rare in England ; the granite of the pavement sparkled in the rays of the sun. The flower-girls hawked about the cheapest and most common-place offerings. These London Floras were sunburnt, and their growth stopped and stunted by the heavy burdens they had borne from their cradles—that of life itself not the lightest carried on their

broad shoulders ; but Nature never yet made a flower which in its first freshness has not some beauty, nor a flower-girl who in her early youth has not a charm for some one.

At a very early hour the Central Criminal Court was crowded—thronged to excess ; so were all the avenues approaching to it. Great, indeed, was the interest excited by this trial for **WILFUL MURDER**—the Wilful Murder of a Peer of the Realm—the young, wealthy, happy, hopeful Marquis of Dunstanburgh. The romance interwoven with this story of blood and crime, the extraordinary details connected with this deep tragedy, which had stolen into the public papers, and thence into every home and heart, filled all with horror, doubt, and intense curiosity as to the solution of the mystery. The constantly-disputed point of **GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY ?** which had become almost a party-question throughout the empire, all united to invest Arthur Bertram's trial

with a harrowing, a thrilling, a bewildering interest, felt alike by all classes, from the noble lords and M.P.'s, who were accommodated with seats on the bench, to the poor hawkers of ginger-beer and lemonade, the vendors of nuts, apples, oranges, &c., &c., and the strolling Floras of whom we have spoken. Outside the Court, the mob formed one dense, closely-packed mass ; inside, there was not an available spot unoccupied. People, outside and in, seemed in high good-humour. So bright a day ! so interesting a trial ! so much sensation ! Oh, it was high holiday for all the spectators ; and so it was in ancient Rome, when the lions, the tigers, and the panthers were let loose upon the Christian martyrs, who preferred death to apostasy.

Among the spectators, and vainly flattering themselves that they were *incog.*, were ladies well known in the fashionable world, armed with opera-glasses. Quietly dressed and closely

veiled, Lady Rockalpine and her daughter, Lady Ida, might have been detected among these lovers of a sensation drama. But it was not merely curiosity that led Lady Rockalpine to that Court. She was very vindictive ; she owed Arthur Bertram a bitter grudge, not only for winning Edith's young heart, but for the part she believed he had taken in depriving her and her family of the alliance she had so ardently coveted—that of the young Marquis of Dunstanburgh. Lady Rockalpine had written to Mrs. Croft when first she left her daughter in that lady's care, desiring her on no account to allow any information connected with Arthur Bertram and the proceedings against him to be conveyed to Lady Edith.

“As far as I can judge,” said her ladyship to Mrs. Croft (by letter), “Lady Edith has ceased to interest herself in the fate of that most guilty and unhappy wretch. I do not think she knows or has tried to ascertain the

result of the coroner's inquest. She is a strange girl, and I have sometimes thought that the fall which, in her childhood, threatened to make her a cripple, may in some way have affected her brain. Let the name of the wretched prisoner never be mentioned in her presence ; keep all newspapers carefully away from her ; and if ever she should make any inquiry as to the fate of the young ruffian, tell her his friends have got him out of the way, and that he is enjoying himself in Paris or Brussels, or where you will ; and do not on any account give her any idea that he is in prison, or to be tried for his life. To such romantic girls as Lady Edith, a culprit like Bertram becomes a hero and a martyr ; and looking upon him in that light, there is no excess—no madness—of which she would not be guilty ! If she thinks him safe and happy, she will soon forget all about him, and, I hope, accept a certain young duke, who saw her in

Paris, and who not only admired *her*, but ardently desires to be allied (by marrying my daughter) to *me*."

Mrs. Croft had answered this letter in the meanest and most abject style, promising everything her ladyship required ; and Lady Rockalpine then troubled herself no more about the matter.

She was very anxious that Arthur Bertram should be found guilty ; and if a something, inseparable from woman's nature, made her prefer that he should not be hanged, the best she wished him was that a plea of insanity should be set up, and that he should be confined as a criminal lunatic during Her Majesty's pleasure—namely, for the term of his natural life.

Lord Rockalpine had taken, in secret, an intense interest in every detail connected with Arthur Bertram's trial, and at one time he had resolved to be present ; but his courage

failed him when the time came, and when Lady Rockalpine sent to propose that they should drive to the Central Criminal Court together, My Lord was nowhere to be found! His absence was the result of a long and ghastly conflict with his own tormented spirit.

He wanted—nay, he burned to know exactly, what passed, what transpired, at this trial. How could he tell but that the train of circumstances might drag him in some way before the public, as connected indirectly with this murder?

In all webs, whether woven by the Fatal Sisters, and called the web of life, or those delicate silken meshes that seem to grow beneath the fingers of fair ladies, a touch will unravel what it has taken a long time to weave. Conscience whispered in the terrified, anxious ear of Lord Rockalpine, that at any moment the web he had woven so carefully might be unravelled, and he stand bare, ex-

posed, disgraced, and defenceless before the world which had so long been at his feet, worshipping in him the great moral reformer ; he who had so greatly improved the discipline of our prisons, established reformatories, formed ragged schools, and realised what many had long deemed impossible—a liberal conservatism. *Alas ! alas !* the pillory of public opinion is at all times a terrible one ! What must it be, then, to him who, for five and twenty years, has occupied a shrine placed on the highest pinnacle of popular esteem, and been worshipped as an idol ?

No wonder Lord Rockalpine, when the awful time drew near, shrank from the dangers which, to his excited fancy and deeply-wounded conscience, seemed almost like his own trial for **WILFUL MURDER**—a trial which he had evaded and averted for five and twenty years, but which he had gone through more than a thousand times by day and by night in his

midnight vision, on his feverish couch ; that couch, with its velvet hangings, surmounted by a coronet, and its gilded griffins rampant forming the supporters. Yes, he had gone through that trial while the busy world slept. He had seen the Court—the Judge—the Counsel for the Crown—the Jury of his Peers. He had heard the verdict, GUILTY ! He had heard the Sentence, and sank back insensible at the long-deferred doom ! And even in his grand office at Whitehall, with the noon-day sun shining brightly on his despatch-boxes, his official grandeur, and his mysterious-looking private secretary, he had gone through every harrowing detail of the trial, which, ever since the fatal day when “the deed that damns eternally was done,” he, ingenious in self-torture, had acted over and over again to himself, at the crowded levée and the Court ball, as by the lonely sea-beat haunts of Rockalpine, or in the green solitudes of Armstrong Park,

or wandering alone by moonlight amid the ruins of Rome, or gliding like a ghost amid the forests of Baden-Baden, while Lady Rockalpine, armed with a card and a pin, was seated at the tables of the misnamed “conversation saloon,” since a deadly silence, the silence of impending doom, prevailed there.

Guilty and miserable wretch that he was ! He had no sooner started by express for a place at a considerable distance from the scene of the trial, than he repented having left London, and conjured up a thousand terrors and “chimeras dire.” Among others, he was haunted by the thought that his absence from the trial of the supposed murderer of his noble friend and nearest neighbour, the Marquis of Dunstanburgh, would excite suspicion, appear strange and unnatural, and lead to those remarks and surmises which he so dreaded.

However, it was too late. He could not

return in time for the trial, had he wished it. While the preliminary formulæ were being gone through, the fratricide was hurriedly slipping out of the express at M——, his hat drawn down, and his coat collar pulled up; bent only on escaping unnoticed, and on hiding himself among the wild flinty rocks, and wishing that the petrifying waters by which he roamed could extend their power to him, and turn to stone the wildly-beating heart, where Terror and Remorse had held their empire for five and twenty years.

## CHAPTER XIX.

For who, to dull forgetfulness a prey,  
This pleasing, anxious being e'er resigned—  
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,  
Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind?

GRAY.

IT is a dreadful thing to see any human being tried for Wilful Murder. The basest ruffian, whose oft-repeated deeds of blood and crime are proved beyond a doubt, and for whom, in vulgar parlance, “hanging is too good,” yet excites a thrilling interest in all who think seriously what life and death really are, when awaiting the verdict that may doom him to a sudden and violent death.

But if the vilest culprit ever tried for Wil-

ful Murder does, in spite of his low brow, his brutal mouth, his small, porcine eyes, and his bull neck, yet inspire a sort of interest, what must have been felt for Arthur Bertram, when he was led into Court by two policemen, and placed at the dock? And what must those who had ever known Arthur Bertram have felt when the sun shone full on his pale brow, his hollow eyes, his thin cheek, and his figure wasted by confinement, distress, and anxiety about Edith and the result of this trial?

Directly Arthur Bertram appeared, all evil impressions vanished about him. They had been excited by the savage portraits which had been sold by tens of thousands, heading the most absurd and impossible life and adventures of one whom the street authors designated as "Bertram, the Bold Bastard," thus calling in "apt alliteration's artful aid" to the embellishment of their broad-sheets.

There was a sublime expression of hope, faith, resignation upon Arthur Bertram's pale, noble, and earnest face. The thick clusters of closely-curling dark-brown hair waved above a marble brow of power and intelligence. In his large, deep-set eyes there was a bright calm and a gentle daring. A pale rose tint on his thin cheeks deepened into a crimson flush as the buzz of surprise and approbation at his appearance went through the Court. And some were touched to the heart, and some women even wept, to see how wasted was the tall form, how thin and semi-transparent the hand he passed across his brow, how graceful in its dignified humility his bow to the judge and jury, and how sweetly sad the smile with which he recognized Mr. St. Ormond and several others of his friends and witnesses.

Among the witnesses for the Crown, and certainly the most conspicuous, was Roger Croft, in his glossy jet-black "Prince of

Wales," and his green velvet sacque (or very loose paletot), with gilt buttons ; the hideous coat, in short, which a servile tailor had named the " Croft," after him.

Lord Hauteville, with his bleared eye, his pale and yet bloated face, was by Roger Croft's side ; and the two were actually betting —and that very heavily—on the trial.

Marion, Lady Hauteville, gorgeously dressed, and looking very handsome, had been driven to the spot by Roger Croft, whose showy equipage had attracted as much notice as that of the Lord Mayor of London might have done.

In spite of an assumed air of independence and swagger, and in spite of a borrowed bloom, there was a ghastly hue spread over Roger Croft's vulgar face ; and all the bluster of his manner could not conceal the aspen-like tremor that shook his frame.

Roger Croft was no voluntary witness at that dread trial. He had suffered enough at

the inquest on the young Marquis to make him dread and shun all public examinations and investigations; but he had been subpœnaed, and, much as he dreaded to be present, he yet dared not to absent himself.

Lord Hauteville, looking very pale and bloated, dressed in a slovenly style, unshorn, his hair dull and matted, and in his eye the dulness, and in his whole person the neglect, that characterise the drunkard, had yet roused himself—or rather, caused himself to be aroused—from the heavy sleep of intemperance, in order that he, too, might be present at a trial on which he had some heavy bets, and in which his low associates took a lively interest, as such men always do in cases of murder, or any other capital offence.

After Arthur Bertram had made his appearance and been placed in the dock, where, on account of recent illness, he was accommodated with a seat, a change came over the expres-

sion of every face, from the pale, clear, earnest countenance of the Judge on the bench, to the twelve thoughtful, anxious visages in the jury-box ; and even the Counsel for the Crown and his junior, with their rather bullying expression, the barristers present out of curiosity, and the spectators who had assembled as if to witness a play—all found a “change come o'er the spirit of their dream,” when, for the first time, all their conceptions of the notorious ruffian, the savage murderer, BERTRAM, THE BOLD BASTARD, were put to flight by the appearance in the dock of the *beau ideal* of an English gentleman, whose countenance expressed at once nobility of soul, cultivation of mind, and goodness of heart, refined, softened, spiritualised, as it were, by the confinement, the anxiety, the mental and bodily sufferings which had sharpened the firm and flowing outline, hollowed the young cheek, traced a deep violet shadow round those dark eyes so

full of light, and changed the sunny-brown and glowing rose tints of youth and health for the pale primrose that is the very livery of pain. As a stream of sunshine came in, and settling like a halo round that noble head, lighted up that massive marble brow and those deep-set eyes, the Judge's countenance relaxed into a smile, the Jury breathed more freely—for it is a fearful thing to be compelled by conscience to find a fellow-creature Guilty—and each Juryman had decided in his own heart that the prisoner in the dock had never committed WILFUL MURDER.

Even the Counsel for the Crown was a little taken aback as he glanced smilingly at the dock. The face and form that met his view were in no respect such as he had expected to see ; for in his close and life-long study of the wicked, he had never once met with the face of Virtue coupled with the heart of Ruffianism. When the Clerk of Arraigns, in a loud, official

voice, said, after he had read over the charge against the accused—"Arthur Bertram, prisoner at the bar, what say you—GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY?" the silence that ensued was so unbroken, and the excitement so intense, that the buzz and hum of a fly on one of the court windows was distinctly heard ; and when Arthur Bertram started to his feet, his fine face first crimson and then deadly pale, his eyes first flaming like those of an angel in wrath, and then slowly suffused with tears, and placing his thin hand on his breast, in a loud, clear voice, said—"Not Guilty, so help me Heaven ! Not Guilty I swear it, in the name of Him, the Sinless One, who died for sin!" a murmur of approbation, which was at once suppressed, went through that vast assembly ; a faint tinge of colour dawned in the pale face of the Judge ; the Jury exchanged glances that seemed to say, "We believe you, prisoner at the bar ;" and the Counsel for the

prosecution (alias the Crown) said, in a loud whisper, to his junior, "So said Palmer, the Poisoner—a fine man, a clever man, a pleasant man, too—and we hanged him! We know that 'a man can smile, and smile, and smile, and be a villain.' "

"Even so," said the junior. "The devil can assume the form of an angel of light."

After the attempt at applause had been suppressed, the business of the trial proceeded in the usual manner, and the Counsel for the Crown, who seemed to take as vivid and as personal an interest in proving Arthur Bertram guilty as if the victim had been his own son, commenced an eloquent and closely-argued statement, so well linked together by the strongest chain of circumstantial evidence—so clearly keeping ever before the minds of the Judge and Jury the MOTIVE of the prisoner's crime, that again the brow of the Judge was corrugated, and his cheek pale.

The Jury now began to look anxious and stern, like men who felt they would be called upon to sacrifice duty to feeling, or feeling to duty; and the tiers above tiers of human faces, which had worn the rosy hue of hope, were now livid with intense anxiety and deadly fear that the noble and intellectual being before them, in whose guilt they could not believe, would yet, by the force of resistless Destiny, and the astute arguments and overpowering eloquence of the Counsel for the Crown, be sent, in the flower of his life, out of this fair world, and leave a blighted name behind him !

## CHAPTER XX.

“The passionate heart of man entered the breast of the wild, dreaming boy ; and he became—what to the last he must be—her adorer.”

*Lady of Lyons.*

THE Counsel for the Crown was a man of great physical and mental energy. He was what Roger called an “old hand,” and “a cunning old file.” Habit had hardened his heart. He felt no pity, no compunction; to get a verdict, was his great object.

It was not so much that he wanted Bertram hanged, as that he could not endure to be defeated or outdone. Still, even he felt the necessity of simulating something like pity for

the young life he was working so hard to cut short.

“ My Lord, and gentlemen of the Jury,” he said, “ in the whole of my long professional experience, I have never felt the pain I feel at this moment. I perceive the impression made upon you by the appearance of the prisoner ; nay, more—I myself, with all the warm impulses and strong emotions which agitate your breasts at work within my own, I cannot but wish that the task which it is my duty to perform had devolved upon another ; for never since I first practised at this bar, my Lord, and gentlemen of the Jury, never have my convictions and my feelings been more terribly antagonistic. It *is* a frightful thing—and in the pale and anxious faces of all present I see my own impressions confirmed—it *is* a frightful thing to connect the idea of a bloody, treacherous, and most remorseless murder, and the awful punishment

that awaits on such a crime, with a young man of the bearing, the education, the position, the intellectual and classical advantages, and I will add (at the risk of being accused of a weakness), the singularly interesting appearance of the prisoner at the bar. It is a frightful thing to feel and to know that one holds in one's own hand the clue of that dark labyrinth of crime, and to feel, too, that after tracking him through all the twistings, turnings, and twinings in the maze of Folly and Guilt into which he has suffered Passion to lead him, one is obliged, in common justice to his noble victim, in common justice to that noble victim's friends and relations, and in common justice, my Lord, and gentlemen of the Jury, to the great family of MAN, to hunt down this blood-stained criminal of the white hands and the black heart, of the cultivated mind, but of the ruthless and savage breast, till, the black labyrinth completely threaded,

we find him at the foot of the gibbet itself!"

Here a murmur of horror and deprecation ran through the crowd, and Mr. Charles St. Ormond, in wig and gown, acting as one of the Counsel for the Defence, sarcastically reminded his learned brother, the Counsel for the Crown, that he was begging the question, and acting in direct opposition to the great, just, and merciful law of the land, which considers every man innocent until he has been proved guilty.

"My learned and eloquent brother," said Mr. St. Ormond, "has actually brought the accused to the scaffold for execution before he has been convicted, and has convicted him before he has been tried. I must, therefore, beg your lordship to call my learned brother to order; for it is as much an act of justice to the 'great family of Man' to justify innocence falsely accused, as to convict and punish remorseless crime."

“My Lord, and gentlemen of the Jury,” said the Counsel for the Crown, “it is my turn to call the Counsel for the Defence to order. My learned brother will have an opportunity for arguing the great question of GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY? when I sit down. I will now simply state the circumstances of this sad, and, I may say, horrible case. The prisoner at the bar, my Lord, and gentlemen of the Jury, is a young man who, like Eugene Aram and some other scholars in England and across the Atlantic, has not found in Learning and Science a refuge from Passion. I do not wish in the slightest degree to prejudice your calm, enlightened, and just minds, gentlemen of the Jury, against the accused, when I say that his birth is of that kind which has been supposed to transmit, with its other disadvantages and inabilities, a certain lawlessness, sadly in keeping with the position of one who comes into this cold world with a brand upon

his brow, to mark him as an outcast of society."

Here Arthur Bertram started to his feet, his fine face crimsoned with shame and anger, his thin hands extended in deprecation. He seemed about to speak, but meeting the calm eye of Mr. St. Ormond, which seemed to say, "Be patient, and bide your time," he pressed those hands tightly, first on his breast, and then on his burning forehead, and sank back, white and trembling, in his chair.

"The prisoner at the bar, my Lord, and gentlemen of the Jury," resumed the Counsel for the Crown, "is the unhappy offspring of man's sin and woman's shame."

Here Arthur Bertram's head sank on his breast, while his hands closed and unclosed convulsively; and Mr. St. Ormond again called his learned brother to order.

"My Lord, and gentlemen of the Jury," almost screamed the Counsel for the Crown,

“ I submit it to you whether I am out of order in making a statement which, however much I may regret to be obliged to make it, is yet essential to the full understanding of this case? The prisoner at the bar is the son of a lovely and ill-starred lady, Miss Clarissa Croft, daughter of Mr. Croft, attorney-at-law, and agent of the late and of the present Right Honourable Earl of Rockalpine. An impenetrable mystery surrounds this unhappy *liaison*; and the name of the prisoner’s father has, though frequently whispered over tea-tables, never been clearly pronounced or positively ascertained. Suffice it to say that Mr. Croft, the prisoner’s grandfather—a very worthy man, and who would have been subpœnaed here to-day as a witness, but that he has most mysteriously disappeared, and can nowhere be found—adopted, educated, and supported the prisoner at the bar as if he had been his own legitimate child. Having contracted a second

marriage, and his daughter, the ill-fated Clarissa Croft, mother of the prisoner, having died in a madhouse—mark *that*, gentlemen of the Jury—having died in a madhouse” (here there was a great stir in the Court)—“the prisoner was brought up with Mr. Croft’s young family by his second wife. A story of a private marriage of Clarissa Croft with a Mr. Bertram, was, I fear I must say it, *invented* by old Croft, to shield his daughter’s memory, and to give some respectability to his grandson’s position; and as the grandfather—as grandfathers often do—doted far more blindly on his grandchild than on his children, nothing was thought too good for young Bertram, as it was agreed to call him. At an early age he was sent to Eton, and thence, at the usual time, to Oxford. At both Eton and Oxford he was intimate with the young, noble, amiable, and generous Lord Pontecraft (since the Marquis of Dunstan-

burgh), the beau-ideal of an English nobleman ; a being in the first warm flush and sunny prime of youth, uniting in his own most noble person the chivalry of a Norman knight, and the virtues of a Christian gentleman. This young nobleman, both at Eton and Oxford, took the young Pariah by the hand, fought his battles, and secured for him a footing which nothing but such generous patronage could have secured, in such an exclusive society, to the illegitimate grandson of an attorney. It was a noble, a sublime friendship, on the part of the young Marquis ; and I must, I will hope that until Love, with his prime minister, Jealousy, broke up this friendship—as Love always does, when two friends carry their sympathy so far as to adore and covet the same ‘inexpressive she’—I will hope and believe that, before that master-spirit came, the prisoner *was* grateful, *was* attached to the most noble deceased.

“ I do not wish to harrow up your feelings, gentlemen of the Jury, nor yet to wound the pride and delicacy of a patrician family, the head of which boasts a name Religion loves, and Morality reveres—I mean the honoured name of the great moral reformer, the Earl of Rockalpine ”—(great applause in the Court)—“ I do not wish to wound the feelings of that nobleman and his family—God forbid !—but in the careful unravelling of this web of crime I am obliged to reveal the fact that a daughter of that noble house had been placed, in her sickly infancy, as a boarder at Mrs. Croft’s, and had grown up from that sickly, and, indeed, crippled infancy, among the Croft children, and the rocks and moors of Rockalpine, and had expanded into health, bloom, and beauty worthy of Hebe herself.

“ Domesticated with the Croft children, she was also domesticated with Arthur Bertram, and a strong attachment between these young

people was the result of this unfortunate intimacy. On the young lady's side it was a sister's tender and true affection ; in the passionate heart of man—the heart of the prisoner at the bar—it was Love!—first, wild, jealous, adoring, exacting Love! Remember, my Lord, and gentlemen of the Jury, that the prisoner at the bar is what in some countries is called a ‘love-child !’ Passion was his only heritage—the passion, lawless, wild, absorbing of Abelard for Eloisa—of Claude Melnotte for Pauline. The prisoner was obliged to content himself with the young girl’s gentle and sisterly affection, although you may as well try to feed a hungry tiger with rose-leaves, as Passion with Friendship. Still he tried to be content, until a rival came upon the scene; that rival was his old college-friend—his boy-patron and protector at Eton—the young, brilliant, generous Marquis of Dunstanburgh. The noble parents of the young

lady approved of and encouraged the Marquis's suit. The young lady herself could not be blind to so much that was good and great in a form made to captivate, combined with manners that could not fail to win woman's favour. Here, too, were high rank, ancient birth, boundless wealth, approval of parents, the world's applause. No wonder the young Marquis found favour in the lady's eyes ; no wonder the spirit of Cain, the craft of Iago, and the jealousy of Othello entered the breast of the adoring but despised bastard. 'Who loves raves—'tis youth's fever,' says the great poet Byron. Love and jealousy combined will turn any brain—they must have turned that of the prisoner at the bar ; for I am prepared to prove that, the night before the murder on Dunstanburgh Flats, a fruitless attempt was made by supposed highwaymen on the Marquis, as he drove home at night from Bessborough Castle through the Black Wood, on

his way to Dunstanburgh Abbey. I will presently call witnesses to prove that a hat with a black crape band attached to it, a blood-stained shirt and overcoat, and other articles, were found concealed in the loft in the summer-house near the scene of the murder, and that all these blood-stained articles belonged to the prisoner at the bar, and have been identified as his by many witnesses. I will prove to you, also, my Lord, and gentlemen of the Jury, that a violent and personal conflict had occurred between the prisoner at the bar and the most noble deceased Marquis, a little while before the murder; that the latter challenged the former to fight a duel with him on Dunstanburgh Flats; that the prisoner at the bar went to the appointed spot without *pistols or second*—mark that, my Lord, and gentlemen of the Jury—without pistol or second ; and I can prove, by the evidence of a most reluctant but most credible and highly respectable witness, Mr.

Roger Croft, junior, who was to have been the young Marquis's second on the occasion, that he left his lordship on his way to the Flats, in order to desire a surgeon to be in attendance in case of need ; that he left the young Marquis of Dunstanburgh in high health, buoyant spirits, and full confidence that the lady of his love returned his affection; and that when, at the end of about twenty minutes, he, Mr. Roger Croft, returned to the spot, he found Lord Dunstanburgh lying on his face in a sort of fissure between the flat rocks—the back of his head battered in, smashed, pounded as it were—a pool of blood surrounding the face and head of the deceased, a loaded bludgeon, covered with blood and hair, lying on a flat at a little distance, and no one near save the prisoner at the bar.

“ My Lord, and gentlemen of the Jury, I know you must feel with me, that if ever a murderer was fairly and justly convicted on

circumstantial evidence, the prisoner at the bar must be that man. How seldom is it that the blackest crimes are not done in the dark, or in those lone and secret places where no eye can see the deadly blow given, no ear detect the curse of the murderer, the cry for help of the attacked, the dying groan of the murdered ! For one murderer convicted on the oath of an eye-witness, thousands have been proved guilty on circumstantial evidence alone. Crime, defiant and fearless, still stalks abroad at noon-day, infesting our streets, blanching the cheeks of our women and children with terror, and firing the hearts of manhood with the thirst for vengeance ; but, if we are a crime-ridden people now, what should we be if Murder—Murder, that loves night, darkness, secrecy, and lonely places, and seldom shows his horrent head and blood-stained hand in the light of day, or the open haunts of man—what should we be, I say, if

all who have not been *seen* to do the bloody deed are to be let loose upon society, and circumstantial evidence, however convincing and irresistible, is driven from our Courts? I know that the unhappy young lady, whose name has been mixed up with this tale of blood and crime, and whose reason, it is much to be feared, has been impaired by the horrors she has witnessed, is said to have deposed that, on her way to prevent the duel, of which she had overheard some inklings, she met with two gipsy-lads, crab-hunting among the rocks, who told her they had just witnessed a bloody murder, and warned her not to go to the Flats. This was solemnly deposed to by the Lady Edith Lorraine at the inquest on the late Marquis's body; but as the unfortunate young lady's manner was very wild and excited, and all search for the gipsy-lads had proved vain, it was supposed that they existed only in the excited fancy of the hap-

less lady, and the coroner's inquest very wisely resulted in a verdict of Wilful Murder against the prisoner at the bar.

“ My Lord, and gentlemen of the Jury,” added the Counsel for the Crown, “ if no one can think without emotion of a young man so gifted in mind, so polished in manners, so winning in appearance as Arthur Bertram, the prisoner at the bar, suddenly sent out of this fair world, and launched upon that dark ocean, without, as his deeds lead us to fear, the pole-star of Faith to guide his soul to the Throne of Grace, can any present think with indifference of the sudden and bloody close of the virtuous, blameless, and Christian life of the young and most noble Marquis of Dunstanburgh? How fair for him was the world from which the treacherous blow of the assassin severed him!—that assassin bound to him by all the ties of gratitude—if gratitude could dwell in the breast of treachery, jealousy,

and ruffianism. Love—first love, happy love—warmed the noble heart now cold in death. Open as the day to melting Charity was that hand, now stiff for ever ! If you have tears, let them flow for a legitimate object—a most noble victim ; make not a hero of an assassin, when a great and good man has been cut off by that assassin's treacherous and dastardly blow—the blow all Englishmen loathe and despise—the blow of one who feared to meet his victim face to face, but stole behind him, and killed his unguarded, unsuspecting benefactor, as ‘butcher felleth ox.’

“ My Lord, and gentlemen of the Jury, I will presently call the witnesses for the prosecution, and my learned brother, Sergeant Darkside, will examine them. When you have heard the evidence, no doubt will remain on your enlightened, manly, and upright minds, gentlemen of the Jury ; and to you I

now leave a cause which is the cause of every Englishman, whether he dwell in castle or cottage, hall or hovel ! May God enlighten your minds to see the truth, and strengthen your hearts and hands to do what is just ; so that your verdict may be received with the applause of all just and honest men, not merely throughout the length and breadth of the land, but wherever among all the nations of the world this ghastly and most bloody murder has been discussed, with white lips and burning hearts !”

The Counsel for the Crown sank exhausted on his seat, and Sergeant Darkside, Q.C., proceeded to the examination of the witnesses for the Prosecution.

While the witnesses were called, and during the bustle that always attends their appearance in the witness-box, a murmur ran through the Court that the Lady Edith Lorraine had arrived, resolved to give her evidence. This

was, in fact, the case ; but how it got wind no one knew.

Yes ; the devoted girl, thickly veiled and closely shrouded, was there, having travelled all night to be present ; and having the very evening before, while wandering in the woods of Rockalpine, been suddenly accosted by her detested adorer, Roger Croft, who, fearing she might appear at the trial, as she had done at the inquest, was there with a carriage ready to carry her to a place of confinement ; thus, having compromised her fair fame, hoping to compel her to accept his base hand. Luckily, Edith had concocted her plans, and confided them to Rough Rob and his party.

They, fearing some foul play—for Roger was better known than he was aware of—were on the watch, masked like highwaymen ; and when they heard the Lady Edith's shrieks, they rushed forth, carried her off in safety to the very carriage her odious lover had procured

for his own objects, and drove her at once to the station, securing him until she was off by the express, when they released him, and let him do what he chose with his vile self.

Although the announcement of the Lady Edith's arrival had passed like electricity through the crowd, no one had as yet seen her, nor did she appear in Court till the witnesses for the Defence were called.

## CHAPTER XXI.

THE first witness for the Prosecution who was called by the Counsel for the Crown was Roger Croft. Now, Roger Croft, after his rash, desperate, and futile attempt to carry off Edith Lorraine, had remained for about two hours bound and guarded by Rough Rob and his friends in the depths of the Black Wood. They offered him no insult, they did him no injury ; but they kept him a close prisoner until they felt sure that the Lady Edith was off by the express to London ; and they knew that there was no other train by which Roger Croft *could* follow, save and except a very slow one, that left Rockalpine at nine o'clock at night, and

did not reach London till the following morning. By this train, then, Roger Croft, who was subpœnaed, and compelled to appear at the Central Criminal Court, set off for London.

He looked, as he stood in the witness-box, not only very malicious and very mean, but very haggard, anxious, and brutally stupid. He had not had time to shave, or do more than hurry on his clothes, including the green “Croft,” and the superfine Prince of Wales hat. His eyes were red and heavy from want of sleep, and the impression he made on all present was as unfavourable as that made by Arthur Bertram had been the reverse. A shudder passed through the frames of the most impressionable among the audience, when, from under his red, swollen eyelids, and white eyelashes, Roger Croft stole a glance of unmistakeable and most malicious hatred at the prisoner in the dock, who met that furtive,

snake-like glance with a calm, proud gaze, folding his arms across his breast the while, and compelling Roger's weak, prominent, pale-blue eyes to droop beneath the clear, searching, indignant, and fixed gaze of Arthur Bertram's dark, soul-beaming eyes.

“Are you related to the prisoner at the bar ?” asked Mr. Darkside, Q.C., with a very insinuating smile, addressing Roger Croft.

“No.”

“Indeed ! I thought he was described as your father's grandson ?”

“He is so described, and has been so considered ; but as he was the *illegitimate* son of a half-sister of mine, who was old enough to be my mother, I never acknowledged him as a relative ; for I have always understood that bastards, by the law of the land, have no relations.”

“Certainly ; no one can dispute that proposition. Are you aware of any evil feeling of

long standing between the deceased Marquis and the prisoner at the bar?"

"Yes."

"What was the cause of that evil feeling, and when did it first begin?"

"My late most noble and most beloved friend the Marquis of Dunstanburgh" (here Roger Croft hid his face in his handkerchief) "had for some time been attached to a young lady brought up by my mother. He had not proposed to the young lady herself, but he had expressed his intention of doing so to her mother, a lady of high rank, who encouraged his suit. Under these circumstances, my most noble friend was startled one day, on going accidentally into Messrs. Hunt and Roskell's, to see in the hand of the prisoner at the bar a locket, containing a miniature and a lock of hair, which at a glance he recognised as the portrait and hair of the object of his own suit."

“Did any conflict take place in consequence?” asked Serjeant Darkside.

“None. The Marquis, who had not been seen by the prisoner at all, passed on to the other end of the shop ; and shortly after the prisoner at the bar left the shop.”

“How do you happen to know the particulars to which you allude ?” said Serjeant Darkside.

“I had them,” said Roger Croft, “from my deceased friend.”

“When did the conflict of which my learned brother spoke take place.”

“A few days later. My most noble and lamented friend, passing through the Black Wood—a part of the Rockalpine property—came suddenly on the prisoner at the bar, who was sitting on a high bank, with the locket I have alluded to in his hand. My noble friend, who had been accepted in the meantime by the young lady’s mother as a

suitor for her daughter, tried to possess himself of a treasure which he thought and felt—as we all should, I think, my Lord Judge, and gentlemen of the Jury, in similar circumstances—that no man had a right to possess save himself, seeing that he looked upon the lady in question as his future wife. The prisoner at the bar, who from his boyhood had been a very pugnacious bully, refused to give up the prize. A struggle ensued. My most noble and beloved friend, whose blood was up, called the prisoner at the bar an insolent bastard, for presuming to raise his eyes to the lady in question, and threatened, if he refused him the satisfaction of a gentleman, to horsewhip him wherever he met him. A meeting was subsequently consented to by the prisoner at the bar; the place fixed upon was Dunstanburgh Flats, the weapons were to be pistols, and I was to be my friend's second."

Cross-examined by Mr. St. Ormond :

“Had the Marquis been accepted or encouraged by the young lady herself?”

“Of that I have no certain knowledge; but I cannot believe that any young lady could be indifferent to the attachment of such a man as the Marquis of Dunstanburgh.”

“A prior attachment would render such indifference very probable. Have you any reason to believe that the young lady gave the locket in question to the prisoner at the bar?”

“If she did, it must have been as a token of sisterly regard, not as a pledge of any warmer feeling,” said Roger Croft, growing livid with the consciousness of the lies he was telling, nay, the perjury he was committing.

“This young lady, then, who had known the prisoner at the bar from her infancy, had a warm, sisterly regard for him—that is something in his favour?”

“Oh ! he could bamboozle her or anyone else ; but he’s a wolf in sheep’s clothing.”

“Ah ! the wolf did not wear the sheep’s clothing at home, you may be sure. A man who is loved in his home is sure to be a sterling character. No one wears a mask at home.” (Applause in the Court).

Here the Counsel for the Crown remarked that all this was irrelevant ; that his learned brother was wasting the time of his Lordship, of the enlightened Jury, and of the whole Court.

Roger Croft then went through all the details, with which the reader is familiar, connected with the intended duel ; the reluctance of the prisoner at the bar to fight his most noble friend ; the subsequent arrangement for a duel with pistols on Dunstanburgh Flats ; his leaving the young Marquis to secure the attendance of a surgeon ; and his finding his beloved, lamented, and most noble friend, half

an hour later, lying in a pool of blood on his face in a fissure of the rocks—a loaded stick or bludgeon close by, clotted with blood and hair, and no one to be seen on that lone and dreary spot but the prisoner at the bar, who pretended to be coming towards the spot. On examining the bludgeon, it proved to be one belonging to Arthur Bertram—the witness remembered his bringing it for protection during a walking tour.

Roger Croft here sat down, covered his face with his handkerchief, and appeared lost in grief for his most noble friend.

The surgeon, Mr. Poke, who had made the *post-mortem* examination, was then called. He deposed that the most noble deceased died from the effect of several most violent, savage, and brutal blows with a bludgeon at the back of his head.

By a Juror: “Did these blows correspond with the bludgeon?”

(Here the bludgeon was produced and handed to the judge and jury. The initials "A. B." were carved on the wood.) They corresponded exactly.

By another Juror : "Is it possible the deceased could have inflicted those blows on himself?"

Mr. Poke : "It is impossible he could have done so ; they must have been dealt from behind."

The Counsel for the Crown here observed that he did not intend to call any more witnesses. The case lay in a nut-shell ; and he should now await, as soon as the Defence had been heard, with confidence the charge of his Lordship, and the verdict of the most enlightened, patient, and intelligent Jury he had ever had the honour to address.

Arthur Bertram then rose, and, as he did so, every heart beat high, every cheek was blanched,

every eye was strained, every neck was stretched, every ear was attent.

At first his voice was low, and betrayed some internal agitation ; his cheek was very pale, and a tremor ran through his frame ; but after the few first words, his voice became clear, loud, sonorous, steady ; his manner firm and composed, and a glow was suffused over the pallor of his fine face.

“ My Lord, and gentlemen of the Jury,” he said, “ I have resolved to address you myself, because I alone, in this Court, *know* that I am innocent. I might have availed myself of the eloquence of some of the greatest orators, and of the special pleading of some of the greatest ornaments of the profession, to persuade you not to find me GUILTY ; but strong in the consciousness of an innocence as spotless (with regard to this foul murder) as your own, my Lord Judge, and yours, gentle-

men of the Jury, I disdain all the powers of oratory, all the science and chicanery of law ; I believe in the irresistible power of TRUTH, and I pray God to enable me to state that truth, so that it may carry conviction to the minds of those on whose verdict my life depends, and that which I value far more than life—my fair fame, and the esteem of all good people in general, and of one angelic being in particular.

“ The Counsel for the Crown and one of the witnesses for the prosecution, Roger Croft, have attempted to prejudice your minds, my Lord, and gentlemen of the Jury, by asserting that I am a bastard ; I deny that such is the case. I have the word—nay, the solemn assurance, of my grandfather, that I was born in wedlock ; and he has often told me that, although a mystery surrounds my birth, yet that it was in his power, and that it would be his duty, at a certain time not far distant, to

raise the veil that has been dropped over my father's name ; and that when that veil is raised, and justice done, I shall find myself not only the lawful son of a man of honour, but entitled to a name I shall be proud to bear. The unaccountable absence of my grandfather, who has been for some time 'missing,' alone prevents my proving this point ; and I only allude to it because the Counsel for the Crown, and one of the witnesses for the Prosecution, have tried so hard to make what they call my *illegitimacy* a weapon against me. It was with unutterable reluctance, and with deep regret, that I heard the name I most revere and love upon earth dragged by the witness Roger Croft into this investigation ; but as this has been done, I have no alternative but to disprove many of the false statements connected with that honoured lady, and with her revered and beloved name. Of the midnight attack on the late Marquis of Dunstanburgh

in the Black Wood at Rockalpine, I, so help me Heaven! know nothing but by report. How my hat, my coat, or any other articles of apparel belonging to me came to be stained with blood, and secreted in the loft over the summer-house at the end of Rockalpine Park, as the Counsel for the Prosecution has told us they were, I know no more than you do, gentlemen of the Jury! I can only believe that the real culprit is some miscreant who had access to my room at Croft Villa, and that his object was less to murder the Marquis of Dunstanburgh, in that midnight attack in the Black Wood, than to ruin me; not but what his Satanic plan may have included both the objects which he has at length triumphantly carried out. That after a frank and friendly understanding and intimacy of many years, and after repeated proofs from the late lamented Marquis of Dunstanburgh that he held me in high esteem, some modern Iago,

whose name I may most unwillingly whisper to myself, but will not, in this early stage of the proceedings against me, proclaim in this Court, may have filled his noble heart with jealousy, hatred, and rage against me, I cannot attempt to deny or to disprove. I would wish to say as little as possible about the *cause* of that sudden jealousy, rage, and hatred; not on my own account, but because the delicate sensibilities of one whose peace and happiness are far dearer to me than my own are concerned. I have, besides, little to object to the account the witness Roger Croft has given of my quarrel and personal conflict with the Marquis of Dunstanburgh; but allow me, with all deference, to ask, what man is there here present who would suffer what he valued most on earth to be wrested from him, even by a Prince of the blood royal—nay, by a Monarch himself—however humble a member he may be of what the eloquent Counsel for the Pro-

secution has called 'the great family of MAN?' The locket the deceased so coveted was mine —mine by every law, human and divine. The Marquis demanded it of me in language the most insulting, and tried to possess himself of it by force. I defended my prize; I defended myself. I hurled him from the bank on which we stood, and he fell from that height into the road. He challenged me; he called me by every name which he thought would most debase and outrage me; he threatened to horsewhip me whenever he met me, unless I accepted his challenge. I agreed to meet him, my Lord, and gentlemen of the Jury; but as my principles are strongly opposed to deliberate murder under the name of duelling, *I resolved not to fight the Marquis of Dunstanburgh*, but to go alone to the place of meeting, to try to convince him that he wronged me. He had a noble and a gentle spirit, and, left to himself and to the prompt-

ings of his own heart, I hoped he would have believed me; but had I found it impossible to soften or convince him, I meant to say to him, ‘ My Lord, I will stand up before you, for I am no coward; but I warn you that I shall not take aim at *you*—*I shall fire in the air; and you, if you aim at me, and I fall, will be a deliberate murderer.*’ This I meant to say to the Marquis of Dunstanburgh ; and I went to that meeting on Dunstanburgh Flats without any weapon at all, and without a second. When I got there, I fancied I was first on the ground, for I could see no one ; when suddenly, at a little distance, I beheld a loaded stick or bludgeon lying on a flat piece of rock ; and on approaching to examine it, I recognised it with horror as my own, and beheld blood, hair, and brains on its rough and loaded head. Horrified, I examined the ground, and beheld a slender crimson stream trickling down the slope between the fissures of the Flats ; and

tracing it to its source, I saw the Marquis of Dunstanburgh lying on his face in a sort of hollow between two dwarf rocks ; his head was frightfully battered and smashed, he was apparently quite dead, and not a creature was near. As I stood transfixed with horror at a little distance from the body, considering what step I had best take, and resolved, at all risks to myself, to try to lift the Marquis up, and see if life was quite extinct, Roger Croft came up ; and his loud cries and shouts for help reached the ears of two coast-guardsmen at some distance, and of a policeman who was with them at the time.

“ Roger Croft at once summoned these men to the fatal spot, and accused me as the murderer of the Marquis of Dunstanburgh ; refusing to hear anything I had to say in my own defence, and, in short, giving me in charge as the perpetrator of this base and bloody murder.

“ At the coroner’s inquest held on the body of the late lamented Marquis, the young lady who has been already alluded to, and who arrived at the scene of the murder soon after my arrest, deposed that she, on her way to the Flats to prevent the duel—of which she had overheard something, in a conversation between the Marquis and Roger Croft—had met with two gipsy-lads, who were crab-hunting among the rocks ; that they were in a state of great agitation and alarm, and that they warned and entreated her not to go to the Flats, as a bloody murder had just been done there—*a murder of which they, hid up among the rocks, had been the unwilling and horror-stricken witnesses!*

“ The inquest was adjourned, my Lord and gentlemen of the Jury, in order to give time for the production of these gipsy-lads. A large reward was offered, but in vain—they were nowhere to be found ; and after a long,

an active, and a fruitless search, they were supposed by many, who did not know, as I do, the integrity and the bright intelligence of the young and noble lady in question, to exist only in her imagination.

“ The inquest was, therefore, resumed without their having been discovered, and a verdict of *Wilful Murder* was returned against *me* ! A warrant was then obtained, and I was imprisoned nearly ten weeks in M—— gaol ; but, even in that wretched prison, Faith and Hope never deserted me ! Kind friends—friends warm of heart, wise of head, powerful, wealthy—believed me what, so help me Heaven, I am—**INNOCENT** ! Yes, by my immortal soul, and all my hopes for its salvation, even if my body perish on a scaffold, sacrificed to delusive evidence and a false oath—I am innocent ! I have no doubt that the same cruel and remorseless wretch, who planned the midnight attack on the late Marquis, in

the Black Wood of Rockalpine, and craftily contrived to throw suspicion on me, planned this foul murder on Dunstanburgh Flats, knowing that I should be there, and must be suspected.

“ My great, good, and wise friends saw how much depended on the evidence of these gipsy-lads, and with the aid, the invaluable aid of Detective Meadows, they set to work ; they left no effort unmade—they spared neither time, nor money, nor trouble, nor energy ; by night and by day they have toiled for me ; and the result is, *that those boys have been found—that they are ready to give evidence that they were eye-witnesses of this ghastly murder ; and that, as I have never seen them, nor they me, it will be satisfactory to all parties that they should be examined as witnesses, sworn, and asked to point out, in this crowded Court, the man in whose hand they saw the bludgeon—the man whom they beheld, from their hiding-*

*place, doing this bloody and most brutal  
murder!"*

Here Roger Croft started, turned deadly pale, and cried out,

"No, no ! I object ; they are suborned !"

As he spoke, his glaring eyes fell on the brown, intelligent faces of the two gipsy-lads, who were brought in at this moment. He gasped, he stuttered, he tried to speak, but voice failed him, and he fell back insensible.

## CHAPTER XXII.

The injurer's face grew pale,  
Pale writhe the lips, the murmurs fail,  
And thrice he strove to speak—in vain!

SIR E. BULWER LYTTON.

ROGER CROFT's sudden indisposition excited considerable emotion in the Court; all eyes were turned from Arthur Bertram, and fixed with suspicion and disgust on Roger Croft—who, however, soon rallied, and though his complexion was of a leaden hue, his lips white, and his prominent light eyes blood-shot, cocked his glossy Prince of Wales hat on one side, and proceeded to settle his collar, square his elbows, take several pinches of snuff, and tap his patent-

leather boot with a very smart cane, the gold head of which represented a skull.

“My Lord, and gentlemen of the Jury,” said Arthur Bertram, in conclusion, “I have now said all I have to say; and I feel a strong faith, a lively hope, and a firm conviction that the witnesses for the Defence, about to be examined by my learned and excellent friend, benefactor, and counsel, Mr. St. Ormond, will establish to the satisfaction of your minds the truth of my statement. ‘I am no orator, as Brutus is.’ I do not, like the learned and experienced Counsel for the Crown, compliment you, my Lord Judge, on your penetration and justice; nor you, gentlemen of the Jury, on your upright and enlightened minds; but I thank you for the patience and courtesy with which you have heard me out. I believe that the Lord Chief Justice of England has not reached that high eminence without the qualities that make a great judge, a sound lawyer,

and a Christian gentleman ; and I believe that a Jury of Englishmen, sufficiently intelligent, responsible, and upright to be impanelled here, will not suffer themselves to be influenced by anything but the *facts* of this case—that they will sift it thoroughly, and return a verdict in accordance with the evidence which is produced on both sides. On that evidence I confidently rely. What has been stated by the witness Roger Croft amounts to nothing but a confirmation of the fact that the Marquis of Dunstanburgh was found murdered on Dunstanburgh Flats, and that I was close at hand when his cries of ‘Murder !’ and shouts for help brought two coast-guardsmen and a policeman, who had just landed from a small boat, to the spot. It is certain, my Lord and gentlemen of the Jury, that when I came to that place, the corpse of the young Marquis of Dunstanburgh was alone ; *but it is certain, too, that the Marquis was not alone when, as a*

*living man, he left Dunstanburgh Abbey.* Who, then, was his companion when he set out for the Flats? The witness, Roger Croft. That witness states that it suddenly struck him that it would be very desirable that a surgeon should be on the ground in case of need, and that, leaving the Marquis on the way to the place appointed, he turned back and went to Mr. Poke's house; but that, not finding Mr. Poke at home, he left word with the maid-servant who opened the door that his presence was required on the Flats. Now, that Roger Croft did call at Mr. Poke's, I believe—nay, I know to be true; but I think I am prepared to prove, my Lord Judge and gentlemen of the Jury, that he called there *after the murder, not before!*" (Great excitement in the Court.) "I believe—so help me heaven!—I believe this ghastly deed to have been done by Roger Croft himself!" (Tremendous agitation; all eyes

turning from Arthur Bertram to Roger Croft ; the latter again becoming of a ghastly hue, and vainly trying to articulate.) “ Yes, I believe that Roger Croft is the murderer of the Marquis of Dunstanburgh !

“ When we come to the great question of MOTIVE, we find motive enough to urge to such a deed a remorseless man of no principle. All his life he has hated me, with a hatred that has grown with his growth and strengthened with his strength. He, too, was an aspirant for the hand of the young lady whose name has been already mentioned here. He was my rival, he was the Marquis’s rival ; but more especially was he my rival, because he knew that the Marquis had not found any favour in her eyes. He knew that, although it suited the deep and desperate game he was playing, to make out to the late Marquis that he was loved—he knew perfectly well that, however much the lady’s noble pa-

rents might advocate the Marquis's suit, the young lady would never give her hand where she could not give her heart, and that that heart was already bestowed by her on another."

(Great excitement.) "I believe, so help me Heaven! that Roger Croft did all in his power to exasperate the Marquis against me, and to urge him to insult and to challenge me. His object I believe to have been twofold—the death of the Marquis, and mine. I believe, and I think I can prove, that Roger Croft was at the head of the attack on the Marquis, as he drove through the Black Wood, on his way from Bessborough Castle to Dunstanburgh Abbey, and that he had dressed himself in clothes of mine—to which, as we were both at Croft Villa, he had easy access—in order to throw suspicion on me. Had the Marquis been shot, and had I been arrested and hanged for that murder, he—for he has no faith in woman's constancy or woman's truth—fancied

he would have ultimately obtained the hand we all three so coveted. As that attack failed, he planned a duel between the Marquis and myself. He was to be second, but before it took place he had obtained a promise from the Marquis of a very handsome provision for himself in either case."

By a Juror: "What do you mean by 'either case'?"

"I mean (as the Marquis had intended it to be a duel unto the death) in case either he or I fell. The Marquis of Dunstanburgh had told Roger Croft that he was resolved either to kill me or be killed himself in the duel he meditated; and that as, in either case, his second would get into great trouble, and have to fly the country, so, in either case, he, Roger Croft, would find an ample provision secured to him by will." (Great sensation). "I do not believe," said Arthur Bertram, "that the late Marquis's affairs have been wound up, the

will proved, or the legacies paid, as yet ; but I do know that he has raised large sums on this bequest, and has been living in great luxury and dissipation ever since the murder of the Marquis. My grandfather's family have been in deep distress, and have been driven to great straits, by the mysterious disappearance of the head of the family, whose absence still continues, and is still unaccounted for ; but Roger Croft has spent in scenes of what he calls pleasure the time I have spent in M—— gaol. It must be clear to all thinking people, that if his grief for the loss of his late patron were genuine, he would not assume the appearance of woe merely when in the presence of a Judge and Jury. Those who really mourn are not to be found in Cider-cellars, Casinos, and at Cremorne——”

(Here the Counsel for the Crown begged the Judge to call the defendant to order, as

these diatribes had nothing to do with the case in point.)

“In my opinion, they have,” said Arthur, turning to the Counsel for the Crown; “for *falsus in uno* is *falsus in omni*. It is only by small indications that I myself have been led to a conviction which dawned upon my mind in M—— gaol, and from which at first I recoiled with horror, but which many circumstances that have come to my knowledge since have completely confirmed, and which I feel certain I shall be able to prove—namely, *that the murderer of the Marquis of Dunstanburgh is Roger Croft himself!* Under these circumstances, I make no appeal except to the patience of the gentlemen of the Jury, while the eminent and learned Counsel who has advised me throughout, and to whose generous aid, true zeal, and great genius, I owe the power of proving that, instead of being a bloodthirsty

ruffian, whose name ought to be execrated throughout all time, I stand here, as I verily believe, on the verge of being proclaimed a martyr. Yes, I am confident that before this memorable trial ends, the momentous question of GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY? will be decided in my favour, and the odium which has been lavished upon me transferred to one who really did the foul deed of which I have been so unjustly accused.

“ My Lord, and gentlemen of the Jury, I have done. May the God of Justice and Mercy enable you to discern the truth! and I feel sure that, the truth once made clear to you, justice will be done to me, and that is all I hope for—all I ask.”

A murmur of applause ran through the Court, as Arthur Bertram sank back in his chair, and buried his face in his hands. That murmur was instantly suppressed by order of the Judge, and the attention of all present

was riveted on Mr. St. Ormond, as he proceeded to examine the witnesses for the Defence. Intense excitement prevailed, when the first name called out aloud in that crowded Court proved to be that of the LADY EDITH LORRAINE.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

No ceremony that to great ones 'longs,  
Not the king's crown, nor the deputed sword,  
The marshal's truncheon, nor the judge's robe,  
Become them with one-half so good a grace  
As mercy does.

SHAKESPEARE.

“I HOPE your father will disinherit that wilful fool of an Edith,” said Lady Rockalpine to the Lady Ida, when Edith was led in as a witness for the Defence. “Oh, I shall faint, I know I shall, to think of a daughter of mine coming into a court of justice to be a witness for a murderer!”

“Oh, he is no murderer, mamma; I’m

convinced he's innocent, and that the verdict will be NOT GUILTY. That wretch, Roger Croft, who leads dearest Hauteville into so much mischief—he it is who has done this vile deed. I see it all."

"Nonsense! Roger Croft is a very sensible, agreeable person, and a man of good manners and good taste. I'll never rest till I get that insane creature, Edith, shut up in a private lunatic asylum, for her wilful folly in coming here to-day to disgrace herself in an open Court by parading her degrading affection for that young base-born ruffian. I'll give her one chance; the Duke of Durham is so much in love with her, he is willing to marry her at once; if she accepts him—and I cannot think she will dare refuse—all will be well; if not, as sure as we're sitting here, I'll have her shut up!"

"Oh, but the Duke of Durham, mamma, is such an odious creature! I remember hearing

Augusta say that when she was presented he made up to her, and she hated him. He was the Marquis of Malplaquet then, with, as she said, a hollow roof and a hollow heart, red hair, and red eyes. Oh ! Edith will never look at him."

" If she refuses Durham Castle, she shall go at once to that admirable private lunatic asylum, 'The Happy Home,'" said Lady Rockalpine. " Gracious heavens ! why, she is wasted to a shadow, white as marble ; and what horrid object is that by her side ? She looks as if she were Mrs. Noah, come out of the ark a widow."

The fact was, Sister Sympathy was by the side of the Lady Edith Lorraine, who clung to her arm, and looked up into the kind face of the Sister of Mercy for encouragement and support. The Lady Edith Lorraine ascended the witness-box, and every eye was fixed on the sweet pale face which was revealed when

she was ordered to raise a thick veil which had shrouded her features. She was also desired to take off her gloves (of which Sister Sympathy took charge), and this done, the beauty of her small, taper, snow-white hand excited universal admiration.

Fervently and reverently she kissed the Testament handed to her for that purpose ; and with downcast eyes and an orient blush suffusing her sweet face, she proceeded to answer Mr. St. Ormond's questions in a clear, sweet voice, which, soft and low as it was, was yet distinctly heard throughout that crowded Court.

“Had the late Marquis of Dunstanburgh any reason to believe that you returned his affection ?” asked Mr. St. Ormond, Counsel for the Defence.

“None,” said Lady Edith. “I think he was aware that my heart was given to another.”

“Was Mr. Roger Croft aware of that circumstance?”

“I cannot answer that question positively, but I think he could not have been ignorant of it.”

“Was the locket containing your portrait and a lock of your hair *given* by you to the prisoner at the bar?”

“It was.”

“Will you relate the conversation you overheard between the Marquis and Roger Croft, when you were concealed in the loft of the summer-house?”

Lady Edith related succinctly, and very nearly *verbatim*, that memorable conversation, with which the reader is acquainted. She added that Roger Croft led the Detective to the summer-house, and suggested a thorough search there.

The Counsel for the Crown and Sergeant Darkside vainly tried, by crafty cross-examina-

tion, plausible argument, and impertinent bullying, to make Edith contradict herself. In vain—she was unshaken.

Her evidence produced an extraordinary effect. The Judge read over his notes carefully. Strips of paper were handed about.

Mr. St. Ormond continued—

“Are you aware of any evil or unkind feeling between the deceased and the prisoner at the bar?”

“No; I know, on the contrary, that the late Marquis of Dunstanburgh entertained the highest possible opinion of Arthur Bertram; and that on one occasion, at Interlachen, where the latter saved my life at the imminent peril of his own, the late Marquis offered him his patronage, and said Arthur Bertram was his *beau ideal* of an English gentleman.”

“You may stand down,” said Mr. St. Ormond.

But Lady Edith lingered for a moment, clasped her hands, burst into tears, and said—

“ My Lord, and you, gentlemen of the Jury, I was brought up with the prisoner at the bar—I have known him from his infancy. I cannot recall the time when I did not love and trust him. I never knew him tell a falsehood or harm a fly. He was the best of boys, and the boy is father to the man. He is, and always has been, the bravest of the brave, and no brave man can be an assassin. It is not possible that one who has always acted like an angel should suddenly become a ruffian. He is innocent as I am of this black crime. May God send into your hearts the conviction that dwells here !”

At these words Edith’s voice failed her, and she sank back fainting. She was carried out of Court, attended by Sister Sympathy.

Mr. St. Ormond then called the gipsy boys.

They were examined apart, and separately and severely cross-examined at great length by Mr. Darkside, Q.C. But they were not in the least puzzled or bamboozled ; they persisted in their first plain statement. Each gave his evidence clearly, and with great intelligence. On being severally asked to point out the murderer, they, after looking around them for some time, fixed on Roger Croft, although he tried all he could, by a hideous grimace, to puzzle and bewilder them.

“ Pray, my lads,” said the Counsel for the Crown, “ how do you know that the gentleman in the green coat and hat is the same you saw on the Flats ? Now, let us hear—had he on that same coat and hat ? ”

“ Na, na ; he had na the same coat and hat, but he had the same gap in his mouth, for he grinned when he gived the blows that killed the young Markis, as he’s grinning now ; and I whispered to Ben, as we crouched down

all of a tremble ahint the rocks, 'Eh, but he's an ugly brute to look at, with them broken teeth and that gap in his front gate,' and Ben whispered, 'He'll do for us, if we can't stale awa' unbeknown.' "

Nothing could shake the gipsy lads, on their separate examination, as to the truth of this testimony ; and Roger Croft's case began to look very bad, and Arthur Bertram's very bright.

The next witness called by Mr. St. Ormond was Kit Moss, who deposed to the fact that he and others had been employed by Roger Croft, disguised as highwaymen, to play the young Marquis a trick, and give him a good fright, by pretending to attack him in the Black Wood at Rockalpine ; that it turned out a very bad joke, as one of the party of sham highwaymen was killed ; that as he did not belong to those parts he was not missed ; and as a great stir was made about it, Roger Croft paid them

handsomely to hush it all up, and keep their own counsel ; that their dead comrade was by them buried in the Black Wood, and that there the matter ended.

This witness was repeatedly examined and cross-examined, but his evidence was unshaken.

Kesiah Cripps, housemaid at Mr. Poke's, was next put into the witness-box. She swore that when Mr. Roger Croft called at her master's, he was very white, and all of a tremble, and that she remarked a splash of blood on his trousers. (Great sensation.)

Betsy Blake, parlour-maid at Croft Villa, deposed that on two occasions she found Mr. Roger Croft in Mr. Arthur Bertram's bedroom ; and that she mentioned it to her fellow-servants as very singular, for they never had been very friendly together. On one occasion, after Mr. Roger was gone out, she went to the closet to tidy it a bit, and to put

in the linen just come from the wash, and she missed the straw hat and the queer stick, and told the cook of their disappearance.

This witness was subjected to severe cross-examination by Mr. Darkside, Q.C., but was in no instance shaken in her testimony.

Sarah Lomax, cook at Croft Villa, confirmed Betsy Blake's statement, as to her having mentioned Mr. Roger Croft's visits to Mr. Arthur Bertram's empty room, and to the fact of the hat and stick being missing.

Detective Meadows was then sworn. He stated that from the first he had suspected that the gipsy-lads had been spirited away; and that he had first ascertained that such lads had been located among the gipsies on the common, and then he had hunted them down. He had discovered them at Ostend, to which place they had been trepanned by a man answering to the description of Kit Moss. Now, he had discovered in Kit Moss the hero

of the attack on the Marquis in the Wood ; and, as he was employed by Mr. Roger Croft in one matter, of course it was natural to suppose he was in another. He (Detective Meadows) had with great difficulty found the boys, with the help of a man of the name of Redpath, or "Rough Rob," who had since disappeared, but who had not rested night or day until the boys were found.

Roger Croft here stuttered out that "Rough Rob" was an escaped murderer ; that, in fact, he was the assassin of the late Lord Hauteville, and that what he did or said was nothing to the point.

Mr. St. Ormond said that was irrelevant. Rough Rob was not called as a witness ; he had helped Detective Meadows to find the boys. If he was, indeed, an escaped murderer, a warrant must be issued for his apprehension, but that had nothing to do with the case in point.

Kit Moss was here recalled, and cross-examined by Mr. Darkside. He, however, confirmed Detective Meadows' report, and added that Roger Croft had told him to take the boys over to Ostend for the benefit of their health and education, as he meant to provide for them. (A laugh.)

The Counsel for the Crown then spoke a few words, which evinced great anxiety for a verdict against the prisoner at the bar, but put forth no argument in favour of such a verdict.

The Judge then proceeded to charge the Jury; and throughout a very careful summary, a strong bias in favour of the prisoner was perceptible.

The Jury retired for not more than two minutes; and returning at once, the Foreman, in answer to the usual question, announced that they found the prisoner NOT GUILTY; and that in their opinion the evidence tended so strongly

to criminate Roger Croft, that they submitted it to his Lordship, whether he should not at once be committed upon a charge of Wilful Murder.

After the necessary forms this was done.

Loud, long-continued, and irrepressible cheers followed the announcement of the verdict of Not GUILTY.

The Judge, before the Court was cleared, congratulated the prisoner on the result of his trial, complimented him on the high testimony elicited in his favour, and added, he left that Court, not only without a stain on his name, but raised in the opinion of all present by his conduct during the trial, and by all that had transpired concerning him.

Arthur Bertram was soon surrounded by friends congratulating and shaking hands with him. But he was thinking only of one ; and Sister Sympathy and Mr. St. Ormond, feeling for the young lovers, led them to a small

room, where, for a few moments, quite alone, the Lady Edith wept on her rescued Arthur's bosom, and he thanked and blessed her, and clasped her to his yearning, beating heart. There, in that little room, they renewed their troth, and had just sworn to be true to the last, when Sister Sympathy and Mr. St. Ormond returned, saying that Lady Rockalpine was eagerly inquiring for her daughter, to take her home with her ; and the weeping girl, lowering her veil, was, after another passionate embrace, and after both Arthur and herself had warmly thanked Mr. St. Ormond and Sister Sympathy, handed into her mother's carriage, and driven rapidly away.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

“Though now to both might Fortune’s wrath deny  
The plighted vows, the altar, and the home,  
Yet still and far there glittered on the eye  
Life’s only fairy-land—the days to come!”

THE Lady Edith’s life at home was a very wretched one. Her mother treated her with supreme contempt; her father continued absent. The Duke of Durham proposed, and Edith, affianced to Arthur Bertram, of course rejected him. After this, her mother’s persecution became intolerable.

Poor Edith! her only comfort was an occasional note thrust through the grating of the Park-lane gardens when she walked there, or

a word interchanged with Arthur at the same spot at early morn or “dewy eve.” Lady Rockalpine discovered this correspondence and these meetings. She removed Edith from London—she took her to Armstrong Park ; but Arthur contrived to see his beloved there. She carried her to Rockalpine ; there, too, Love, who “laughs at locksmiths,” outwitted her ladyship.

The day, the dark day, however, came at last, when Arthur completely lost sight of Edith, and Edith neither saw nor heard of Arthur.

Roger Croft had been brought to trial, found guilty, and hanged at N——, the assize town of the county in which he did the foul murder for which he suffered. Almost to the last he protested his innocence ; and when the final hour came, he was insensible, and was carried to the gallows.



Three months had glided by, and Edith, who was twenty, was, according to a legal fiction, of age. Detective Meadows, who had always taken a lively interest in Arthur, undertook to discover the retreat of his beloved. Detective Meadows, like Richelieu, admitted into his lexicon no such word as FAIL. He ascertained that the Lady Edith Lorraine was concealed and confined in a private lunatic asylnm in Northumberland ; “The Happy Home” was its name. It was the same in which Clarissa Croft had died twenty-six years before.

Arthur Bertram had, ever since his trial, maintained himself by his pen. Mr. St. Ormond had put him in the way of doing this, and had, besides, insisted on lending him a sum of money to commence his new career with.

Old Croft had not yet been heard of. Mrs. Croft was a wretched being, and so wild with grief at the ignominious fate of her darling

son, that her friends feared that her own safety, as well as that of all around her, would render it necessary to confine her as a lunatic. Her daughters were very kind to her, and so were her three sons-in-law; for Gloriana was married to Mr. Tight-Blower shortly after their meeting in London.

Detective Meadows, having obtained a search-warrant, introduced himself in the disguise of a nurse into "The Happy Home." Arthur Bertram awaited the nurse and the patient on horseback at an appointed spot on a moonlight night. As the village clock struck twelve, the Detective, who had enlightened Edith as to his mission, appeared, with the rescued treasure clinging to his arm.

Poor Edith! what with all she had suffered in that dread prison-house—that haunt of irresponsible cruelty—that tomb of the living, and the excitement, the hope, the joy, the reaction, she was in a fainting state when she

was clasped in Arthur's arms, and lifted to his horse.

Arthur's object was to bear his darling to the home of the Sisters of Mercy—the bosom of Sister Sympathy. Their way lay through the Black Wood, and across the wild moor; but just as they emerged from the latter, they came suddenly on four men masked and armed. These men were lying in wait for Mr. Byles, the Earl of Rockalpine's new agent, who had lowered their wages, raised their rents, and roused them to madness. Rough Rob was one of these men; Kit Moss was another. They did not mean to murder, but to compel Byles to grant them better terms. At the approach of a horse they rushed forth, for Byles was expected on horseback. Arthur had already felled the foremost with his heavy whip, when Rough Rob, recognising him as the moon shone full on his face, loudly called on his mates to fall back, and explained his

error. After this, Arthur Bertram proceeded on his way unopposed ; and, after some hours of hard riding, he reached the home of the Sisters of Mercy, and placed his darling on the kind breast of Sister Sympathy.

A month later, with the sanction of Sister Sympathy and Mr. St. Ormond, Edith, who could not venture to let her cruel parents know of her intentions, for they had imprisoned her, sane as she was, in a lunatic asylum, was married to Arthur Bertram. She was of age. She required the protection of a husband after treatment so illegal, so inhuman ; and, all things considered, her friends, her only true friends, thought this was the best way of protecting her from further outrage, and of ensuring her lasting happiness.

Lord and Lady Rockalpine, when they heard of Lady Edith's marriage, cast her off for ever. It was not a very long "for ever," at least *on earth*, for one of them !

## CHAPTER XXV.

They met again, and oft ! what time the star  
    Of Hesperus hung his rosy lamp on high,  
Love's earliest beacon, from our storms afar,  
    Lit in the loneliest watch-tower of the sky,  
Perchance by souls that, ere this world was made,  
    Were the first lovers the first stars survey'd.

SIR E. BULWER LYTON.

LORD and Lady Rockalpine held high festival  
at Rockalpine Castle, to celebrate the nuptials  
of the Lady Ida with the Duke of Durham.

All the nobility and gentry of the country  
were present. The Earl and Countess of  
Richlands, with the Contessa, were among the  
guests. The wicked Count Romeo di Rocca-  
bella had been killed in a fray. Jocunda—  
now a happy mother—had written to the  
Contessa, to announce the Count's death,  
which had taken place some months before it

was known to her. Lady Rockalpine, upon this, forgave the Contessa.

A splendid *déjeuner* was spread on the lawn ; the poor were feasted in the barn. It was a sultry day in August, but the weather-glass foretold a terrible storm. Lord Rockalpine was in high spirits ; he was flushed, excited.

The bride and bridegroom were gone, but still the feasting went on ; when suddenly a new guest appeared at the board. It was old Croft—his daughter, Mrs. Cutts, on one side, and Rough Rob on the other—so thin, so pale, so shadowy, many thought it was his ghost!

“ My lord,” he said, “ I come at last ; I come from my bed in a foreign land ; I come to do an act of justice before I die. Your noble brother fell in yon wood ! He fell, not as was supposed by the hand of Robin Red-path here, *alias* Rough Rob, he fell by your hand, my lord ! ”

Here the storm, which had been long gather-

ing, burst out, the lightning flashed, the thunder growled, the rain poured down in torrents.

“ Remove that maniac !” said Lady Rockalpine.

“ My lord,” continued old Croft, “ on his death-bed your brother bound me by a solemn oath never to reveal the truth till his father was no more. Before that nobleman was buried, I was carried off by one who, full of plots and lies, has paid the penalty of his crimes. He incarcerated me in a French madhouse, to prevent my proving the late Earl’s last will—which I have here—in favour of Lady Edith, now Countess of Rockalpine. But now that the hand of Death is upon me—now that I have been spared only to do justice to all—I proclaim not only that you, my lord, did that foul murder, but that, as your brother had been privately married for four years to Clarissa Croft, my daughter (of which marriage here are the proofs), Arthur Lorraine,

commonly called Arthur Bertram, his son, born in wedlock, is by rights the Earl of Rockalpine!"

" You lie!—it is a foul, a base lie!" shouted the Earl of Rockalpine. " I call God to witness it is a foul lie!"

Here all started to their feet, while a sudden darkness wrapped the festive scene ; and the next moment an electric flash lighted up the pale faces of all present, and revealed the fact that the Earl had fallen, with his face on the table, struck by lightning—killed by the hand of God ! They raised him—he was a blackened corpse ! After a life of anguish he had died by this sudden stroke—died impenitent —died the death of a murderer !

---

Old Croft lived long enough to see his grandson Earl of Rockalpine, and Edith his Countess.

How fortunate that they were married before they were aware that the father of the one had been the murderer of the father of the other ! That knowledge must else have severed them for

ever; as it was, Edith often said that it behoved her to be doubly tender as a wife, since it was owing to her father that her Arthur was an orphan.

They live in seclusion a life of virtue, and are blessed with many heirs and heiresses of their beauty and their truth.

Rough Rob and his Mary are no longer compelled to hide. They are well provided for now by ARTHUR LORRAINE, the new EARL OF ROCKALPINE, who has made Rough Rob his head gamekeeper. The new Earl has granted a handsome annuity to the supposed Lord and Lady Hauteville, now Mr. and Mrs. Lorraine, to be paid to them only as long as they live peaceably together.

The unhappy woman, who for five and twenty years had figured as Countess of Rockalpine, retired to the Continent, and with her own large fortune bought herself, as a husband, an Italian Prince.

Mrs. Croft died in “The Happy Home.”

After some years of retirement, Arthur, Earl of Rockalpine, is beginning to take a part in politics and active life. Edith still shrinks from that world which, when the veil was lifted, beheld in the great Moral Reformer (her father) a hypocrite and a fratricide! But home is her sphere of happiness, and the great world has no charms for her.

“Eh, my lord!” said Rough Rob, as smooth, well shaven, his hair oiled, and in a bran-new gamekeeper’s suit, he kissed his Mary’s now plump rosy cheek, and, followed by his dogs, joined his lord on the moors—“Eh, my lord! I’m a new mon the day. But we’d both gone through a deal, before the world comed to a right understanding of us, and of the momentous question of GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY?”

THE END.

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